The Nation.

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EDITORIAL

SAM PLAYS IT AGAIN

It's one of history's little jokes that Ronald Reagan, who came to power partly because he dumped on Fifth Amendment invokers in an earlier incarnation, leaves as one of his more enduring legacies a new appreciation of our constitutional protection against forcing citizens to incriminate themselves.

But given the character of Reagan underlings such as Oliver North and John Poindexter, who invoked their Fifth Amendment rights to negotiate immunity from prosecution; and of various housing officials like Deborah Gore Dean; and now former Housing Secretary Samuel Pierce Jr., who refused to answer Congress's questions; it seems highly unlikely that the term "Fifth Amendment Reaganite" will ever become the badge of honor it did for the so-called Fifth Amendment communists.

As everyone knows, Pierce is under suspicion of having diverted hundreds of millions of dollars from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to his Republican cronies. But not many remember that this is the same Samuel Pierce who in 1964 was the F.B.I.'s secret choice to "assume the role of the leadership of the Negro people" as part of its plan to undermine Martin Luther King Jr., one of J. Edgar Hoover's most vocal critics, and "take him off his pedestal" [see Victor Navasky, "The F.B.I.'s Wildest Dream," *The Nation*, June 17, 1978].

Unlike the Congressional inquisitors of yesteryear, today's Congress is doing its job when it investigates the dispensation of political favors by members of the executive branch. But the current hearings on corruption at HUD could serve another purpose if the spotlight on Pierce, exemplar *extraordinaire* of the F.B.I.'s fantasy life, reminds Congress that it should bring equal zeal to its role as watchdog over our secret police agencies.

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Ramsey Clark

RUSSIA AND IRAN MAKE UP
Dilip Hiro

FARMING AND THE ENVIRONMENT
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RESTORING CAMBODIA
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BLACK LEADERSHIP GAP

EYES ON THE PRIZES, NOT THE PEOPLE

SUSAN ANDERSON

For black politics, Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins's mayoral primary victory is an invigorating sign, resembling the kind of multiracial, progressive coalition built by the late Harold Washington in Chicago. Sadly, aside from Dinkins's win, these are hardly jubilee days for black politicians wanting to challenge entrenched powers. In Detroit's mayoral primary Coleman Young managed to snuff out the opposition—notably Congressman John Conyers—to his indifferent reign. The Atlanta municipal race looks like *Back to the Future*, with no visible opposition to former Mayor Maynard Jackson. And too many of those supporting Jesse Jackson's moves to run for Mayor of Washington are Democrats seeking a convenient way to contain or defuse his presidential potential.

In February 1988, radical writer and theologian Cornel West provided a taxonomy of contemporary black American leadership in the pages of *Zeta* magazine, and declared a crisis in the making. "There has not been a time in the history of Black people in this country when the quantity of politicians . . . was so great, yet the quality . . . has been so low," West wrote. "Just when one would have guessed that Black America was flexing its political . . . muscles, *rigor mortis* seems to have set in. How do we account for the absence of Frederick Douglasses, Sojourner Truths, Martin Luther King Jrs., Malcolm Xs, and Fanny Lou Hamers of our time?"

West's role models were

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LETTERS.

COMEDY OF ERRORS?

Waltham, Mass.

There is no truth whatsoever to the suggestion in the October 2 issue of *The Nation* ["'A Gangsterdom of the Spirit'"] that either the president of Brandeis University, Evelyn E. Handler, or a member of the university's Board of Trustees, Martin Peretz, played any role in the preliminary decision not to publish E.L. Doctorow's May 21 commencement address in the *Brandeis Review*. Had you contacted us before publishing these baseless allegations—as sound journalistic practice and common courtesy would dictate—we would have given you the facts.

The chronology of events leading up to that decision, as well as my apology to Mr. Doctorow for the unfortunate manner in which this matter was handled, are contained in the attached letter of September 26.

Dear Mr. Doctorow:

Since I made the decision that led to the controversy, let me apologize for the unfortunate manner in which this matter has been handled. Let me also assure you that when I determined not to publish your speech I did not consult with or receive input from any other university officer or trustee.

Here are the relevant facts:

May 24: John Hose, the president's executive assistant, who was then also acting vice president for public affairs, wrote to you seeking permission to distribute the text of your speech and to publish it in the *Review*.

Late June: After receiving permission, Dr. Hose mailed typewritten texts to individuals who had requested copies (including one of our trustees, Martin Peretz); he also transmitted the text to the editor of the *Review*.

July 5: I became vice president for public affairs and thereby responsible for publication of the *Review*.

Early August: I reviewed the manuscripts available for publication in the fall issue with the editor, Brenda Marder, and I decided not to publish your speech.

August 10: Mrs. Marder sent you a letter advising you of this decision.

Late August: The September 4 issue of *The New Republic* published a critique of your speech by Dr. Peretz, who was present when you delivered your address but says he didn't realize its full import until he saw it "in print," by which he meant in typewritten form.

September 4: You wrote to President Handler expressing displeasure over the fact that Brandeis had decided not to publish the speech and inquiring whether she made this decision in response to an overture from Dr. Peretz.

September 8: President Handler responded to your letter and advised you, among other things, that I had made the decision not to publish without her knowledge and without any involvement from Dr. Peretz.

September 14: I learned from a *Boston Globe* reporter that the next issue of *The Nation* would publish your speech along with excerpts from all the correspondence mentioned above except President Handler's letter.

. . .

Clearly, Brandeis at first gave you every reason to believe that the speech would be published and later reversed itself. What is less clear are the circumstances surrounding that decision—how, why and by whom it was made. I can shed some light on these matters.

When Mrs. Marder and I reviewed the manuscripts for the fall issue, more material than space was available. Each manuscript was considered for exclusion. I asked whether the university had made a firm commitment to run the speech and whether it was customary to publish commencement addresses. She advised that no firm commitment had been made and that the *Review* had never published a commencement address. I recommended withholding your speech and Mrs. Marder concurred. At that time, I had not read Dr. Hose's letter to you, and I did not consult with him or with President Handler, both of whom were on vacation. In addition, I had no knowledge of Dr. Peretz's interest in the speech and received no communication from him.

In order to clear up any misunderstandings that may still remain, President Handler has decided that the *Review*, with your permission, will publish the May 21 address. . . . I am pleased that we are able to put this unfortunate matter behind us.

David M. Rosen
Brandeis University

GAGTIME?

Washington

The Nation is always ready to imagine conspiracies against free speech in America. So it has now concluded, without so much as an inquiring phone call to me, that I successfully intervened with officials at Brandeis University to prevent the publication of E.L. Doctorow's commencement speech in the *Brandeis Review*. Doctorow also imagines it was mine "to clear," and that I spiked it instead. There is no truth in any of this.

Here is what actually happened. When I heard Doctorow warn his audience that soon "only fascists will be in the mainstream," I thought that I might use this instance of nuttiness to comment in *The New Republic* on the kinds of nonsense often accepted as wisdom in the elite culture. But I did want to make sure that I had Doctorow's words precisely: I called Brandeis to inquire whether there was a transcript. I was told by John Hose, the president's assistant, that Doctorow was editing his text for publication. I did not comment, to Hose or to anybody else, on the appropriateness of its publication in a university journal. I did ask that the text be sent to me once Doctorow had returned it, and it was. Doctorow's address read much as I remembered hearing it—its hysteria intact—and I wrote my comment.

It is true that President Evelyn Handler and her assistant knew my feelings about the speech. I told them within minutes after the commencement ceremonies that I was appalled by its intellectual shabbiness, especially by its potted history. That was three days before Handler wrote Doctorow that she had "received only the most positive and enthusiastic comments" about his speech and three days before Hose wrote to request permission to reprint.

I have no idea who at Brandeis decided not to reprint the speech or, for that matter, why. The first inkling I had that it had been canceled was when I read an article in the September 15 *Boston Globe* saying so, an article based, alas, on your own wholly groundless charges against me. *Martin Peretz*

After publishing excerpts from Brandeis's letters to Doctorow explaining why it reversed its decision to publish his commencement address in its alumni magazine, we invited Brandeis and trustee Martin Peretz to respond. There are some inconsistencies in the Brandeis account. Was it the Brandeis Review*'s "policy" never to reprint commencement addresses, as the editor wrote Doctorow, or was this a* post hoc *policy invented by the new veep for p.r.? How could there have been "no commitment to publish" when Doctorow had been asked permission and had granted it? President Handler wrote Doctorow that she learned of Peretz's views when she read them in* The New Republic. *Peretz states that he conveyed his opinions "within minutes after the commencement ceremonies." Nevertheless, we accept Brandeis's claim that the whole episode was the result of internal failures of communication, and we accept Peretz's avowal that he had nothing to do with spiking it. For the record, what he says* The Nation *has "concluded" were in fact questions Doctorow (rightly) raised. We are pleased that Brandeis has re-reversed its decision and will publish Doctorow's address. Now the university community can decide for itself whether the speech was "a calumny against America" (Peretz) or "a critique of right wing Republicanism" (Doctorow).* —*The Editors*

ON 'FEMINIST FASCISM'

Oakland, Calif.

Jackie Stevens's reply ["Letters," June 5] to what I thought was a civil request to go beyond her smears of me and provide evidence of my "misogyny" and "nationalism" included more smears and lies. I never, for example, referred to Toni Morrison and Alice Walker as "literary mammies," a quote attributed to me by Stanley Crouch, who may be a brilliant music and literary critic, but

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EDITORIALS.

Overt Meddling

In the old days when Presidents of the United States wanted to muck about with the political process of some far-off land, they would send in the Marines. In more enlightened times they called on the C.I.A. to do the job more discreetly. Nowadays, the idea is to send in the dollars openly through a respectable-sounding conduit called the National Endowment for Democracy. Whatever it's called, it's still the same old interventionism, and we say enough.

Ronald Reagan can be credited with this overtization of covert action. In 1983, with the assent of Congress, he founded the N.E.D. in order to transmit U.S. funds to ideological allies throughout the world. George Bush is carrying on the tradition with his recent proposal that the N.E.D. directly fund the United Nicaraguan Opposition.

Congressional leaders said no to the President's request, but they have not rejected the alternative plan offered by Secretary of State James Baker, which calls for the N.E.D. to distribute $5 million to groups in Nicaragua for so-called nonpartisan activities: election monitoring, voter registration, get-out-the-vote efforts and party building. An addi-

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tional $4 million from other sources would go to "technical support" for the election process; its disbursement, Baker says, would be "flexible."

The N.E.D. has already funneled some $3.5 million for "nonpartisan" activity into Nicaragua. In practice, this has meant, among other things, funding the newspaper *La Prensa*, which is run by Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, UNO's presidential candidate. Now Bush wants to inundate Nicaragua with another $5 million in N.E.D. money. That would mean a total of $8.5 million in endowment funding for a country with only an estimated 1.6 million voters. Even by its own standards, the N.E.D. has gone overboard. In supporting opposition movements in Chile, Poland, Panama and the Philippines, it never spent more than $2.8 million, and all but Panama have greater populations than Nicaragua.

The claim that this money will be used in a nonpartisan, pro-democratic way is based on two fictions. The first is that there is one broad and united opposition, UNO, and thus funding it is the equivalent of funding democracy. Actually, there may well be four other opposition candidates in the presidential race besides UNO's. A greater fiction is that the N.E.D. money will support democracy-enhancing activity, not political campaigning. In reality, the funds are comparable to "soft money" used in U.S. Federal elections—contributions made to political parties for party-building and supposedly unavailable for use in specific elections. But it takes little ingenuity to find ways to apply such funds to aid a particular candidate directly—for example, voter registration drives in key areas. Giving money to groups allied with UNO for such purposes is as good as pouring it into campaign coffers.

Also troublesome is Baker's use of the word "flexible" regarding the $4 million, which is informally earmarked for several uses, including election monitoring to be conducted by international and private groups such as the delegations organized by the United Nations and the Organization of American States. There's justifiable suspicion on Capitol Hill about approving funds for as-of-yet unnamed recipients and uses. And there's further worry about the Bush Administration's reluctance to agree to a ban on C.I.A. involvement in the election. The existence of the N.E.D. did not prevent the C.I.A.'s messing about in the 1984 elections in Nicaragua [see Roy Gutman, "Nicaraguan Turning Point: How the 1984 Vote Was Sabotaged," *The Nation*, May 7, 1988].

The Administration is more interested in results than in democracy. It wants to "win" an election. At a recent meeting with Congressional leaders, Baker gave a sales pitch for UNO. But according to an aide to one of the participants, Baker said nothing about how the program of the UNO candidates would benefit Nicaraguans. His message was, *We've* got a good ticket here. *We* can win this. "It was a very Yankee perspective," the aide notes.

Democrats, not eager to be tarred with blame if UNO loses, are likely to take the easy way out. They may quibble over the amounts in Baker's plan and insist on some ban on C.I.A. activity, but they will not challenge the cynical principle underlying his scheme. They should. It's not up to the United States to pick which of the candidates has the best shot at toppling the Sandinistas. Let Nicaraguans themselves decide who among them, if anyone, deserves their support.

Drugs, Lies & TV

President Bush, in his first prime time address to the nation, on September 5, showed the American people a plastic bag and told them it contained crack "seized a few days ago in a park across the street from the White House. It could easily have been heroin or PCP."

He did not say the sale was arranged with great difficulty and at considerable cost by the Drug Enforcement Agency at his request. He did not say that there is no drug problem in that area, as law enforcement agencies concede. Nor did he mention that drug use in the United States has dropped significantly in the last decade for reasons wholly unrelated to law enforcement efforts. A national survey by University of Michigan scientists shows marijuana use among high-school seniors down from 37 percent in 1978 to 18 percent in 1988; PCP down from twenty-four out of 1,000 seniors in 1978 to three out of 1,000 in 1988. Between 1985 and 1988 cocaine use by high-school seniors dropped from 6.7 percent to 3.4 percent. He did not say police, prosecutors, courts and prison, not to mention the military, can do little to prevent crime, including drug abuse.

He was telling us that the drug crisis reaches everywhere and is so dangerous it threatens government and its last bastion, the presidency itself. He urged more police, tougher border patrols, foreign military interventions, bigger prisons and longer sentences in an all-out war on drugs.

When confronted later by the press with the falsity of his statement about the crack buy, he countered, "I don't understand—I mean, has somebody got some advocates here for this drug guy?" Is it too much for the press to advocate that the President tell the truth in a country fighting to make the world safe from the evil empire of drugs? Or, as with all war, is the lie a major weapon?

Our national drug problem is far too serious to be dealt with falsely. An education President should not use his bully pulpit to teach us to lie, posture, threaten and divide. Expenditures for law enforcement have been increasing at a rate four times greater than those for education. Only recognition of the truth and effective action based on it can free us from the human tragedy of drug abuse. A first truth in the war on drugs, as on crime generally, is that the enemy is us, or more precisely, our children, hence our future.

The population of our prisons is already greater than that of Washington, D.C. Inmates are overwhelmingly young, male and from minorities. Is it possible that a country that talks of freedom, equality and justice and claims any sense of responsibility, decency or a degree of intelligence would offer more prisons as a solution to anything—except the perils of freedom, equality and justice?

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New Yorkers should remember Governor Nelson Rockefeller's drug laws, which sentenced thousands of young people to cruel and destructive experiences for a minimum of fifteen years while it corrupted legal processes, destroyed respect for the rule of law and, if anything, increased drug abuse. It was years before the criminal justice system recognized the worthlessness of Rockefeller's legislation as a means of controlling the flow of drugs.

The Vietnam War should have taught us the impossibility of controlling foreign conduct by military intervention. This includes the impossibility of stopping the production of cocaine, heroin and other drugs in foreign countries by military action. Woe to the nation that accepts such military intervention, and woe to us if we expand the practice of using the armed forces for law enforcement.

In a real fight against drugs, we must work with our young people. To reduce crime and drug abuse we must work for adequate housing and assistance to families; good health care; an education for a full life, including the truth about drugs; meaningful jobs and commitment to freedom, equality and justice. Children born and raised healthy, in loving families among people aspiring to those ideals, will rarely abuse drugs, or hurt one another. Only a totalitarian society needs to control people by force and fear. President Bush's false presentation of the drug threat at the White House gate tells us he is willing to try. RAMSEY CLARK

Ramsey Clark, former Attorney General of the United States, practices law in New York City.

Pittston Power

At 4 P.M. on September 17, two large trucks wound their way up the dusty mountain road leading to the Pittston Coal Company's Moss 3 preparation plant in Carbo, Virginia. At the entrance, the trucks stopped, their rear doors opened, and out stepped ninety-eight miners dressed in camouflage, accompanied by a minister. They marched quickly past the blue-uniformed Vance Security Assets Protection Team and occupied Moss 3. The security people, caught off guard and outnumbered, fled the plant.

Within minutes, 200 supporters of the miners had massed at the entrance to the plant and barred the state police from going inside. Word of what was happening at Moss 3 spread through the coal fields. By nightfall, the number of people outside the plant had swelled to 2,000.

Welcome to what United Mine Workers of America (U.M.W.A.) vice president Cecil Roberts calls "class warfare in southwestern Virginia." For three days the miners controlled Moss 3. They brought in provisions; they checked cars entering and leaving the vicinity; they took Pittston management on tours of the facilities to prove that no damage was being done; and they organized their supporters, who continued to camp out at the site, preventing state police from entering. According to strikers the occupation shut down Pittston's coal production.

At 9:30 P.M. on September 20, hours after a Federal judge had ordered the miners to leave the plant, more than 5,000 people rallied outside Moss 3. Then, as quickly as they had come, the ninety-eight miners marched out of the plant and melted into the crowd, avoiding arrest.

The occupation of Moss 3 is the latest event in the six-month strike of 1,700 members of the U.M.W.A. against the Pittston Coal Company—one of the nation's largest coal producers [see Denise Giardina, "Solidarity in Appalachia," *The Nation*, July 3]. It's a battle in which Pittston appears to want to break the union. It's a battle that U.M.W.A. president Richard Trumka says the union can't afford to lose.

The strike has been marked by a wide range of tactics and a high level of militancy. In April and May, 3,000 people were arrested for blocking entrances to Pittston mines. In June and July, 40,000 miners throughout the eastern United States struck for weeks in sympathy. Angry miners have taken other actions: littering mine entrances with nails; spraying skunk scent into scabs' cars; trashing company and security trucks.

The strike has become a rallying point for insurgent forces in the labor movement. In the weeks before the occupation 20,000 union, religious and community supporters from across the country marched at Pittston. Even the leadership of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., which early in the strike took a "hands off" policy, is beginning to show support.

Of course, the company has its allies—powerful ones. Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles has spent $1 million a month on nearly 300 state police who have been stationed in the coal fields to "keep order" and to keep Pittston operating. The courts have been more than willing to attempt to shackle the miners with injunctions. So far, the union has been fined over $22 million for activities related to the strike—compared with the $47,000 Pittston was fined in 1983 when seven miners were killed in an explosion in one of its mines. And despite having been charged with committing many unfair labor practices in July, the company has not yet been penalized by the National Labor Relations Board.

The daily press has largely ignored the strike [see "Beat the Devil," page 410]. The occupation was not reported while it was in progress. But the striking miners are determined to hold out. So far they've cut Pittston's coal production 25 to 30 percent. To win, they will have to shut down Pittston's mines. With the occupation of Moss 3, they have found an effective way to do this. And by reviving a tactic that recalls the great sit-downs of the 1930s that helped build the industrial unions, the miners have reinvigorated their supporters.

As the miners left Moss 3, vice president Roberts promised that the occupations would continue. If this happens, unionists from across the country will flock to Virginia in support. For the miners and their allies, the class warfare is heating up. PHILL KWIK

Phill Kwik is a staff writer for "Labor Notes," a monthly newsletter based in Detroit.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Class Angles

In the old joke about *The Daily Worker*, an editor hands a rewrite person a wire service item about a motorcyclist knocked over by a car, and says, "Class angle this one, comrade." You can class angle most things and make more sense of them. The British newspapers have been in an uproar about the apparent ease with which Irish Republicans pierced security at the Royal Marines Music School in Deal and deposited a bomb that killed British soldiers.

The efforts of the I.R.A. were assisted by the economic policies of Margaret Thatcher. Private security firms now bid on the job of guarding many of Britain's military installations. In the case of the Deal marine camp, the contract was won by an outfit called Reliance, which pays its guards £2.30 an hour, about $3.79. At those rates Reliance got people who had to work two jobs to make ends meet and who probably fell asleep after a half hour on watch.

This is hardly the first time the I.R.A. has attacked military bands. Before they were gunned down, the Gibraltar Three were planning to blow up a band, and there have been other successful assaults. Bands may be militarily more vulnerable, but it's hard to see the propaganda value of blowing up a bugler or tuba player unless you figure that the past eighteen years of Republican military strategy has been designed by people consumed with hatred for Sousa's music, and the whole Ulster thing is a red herring.

Along the road in Youghal, eight miles from where I'm writing these lines in Ardmore, County Waterford, there occurred one of the principal engagements of the War of Independence: a delayed detonation that finished off some young fellows in a band following the officers' armored car. Eight miles in the other direction, toward Dungarvan, is Old Parish, native sod to the Daley family, whose migrated kin attained eminence in Chicago. On September 23, Mayor Richard M. Daley returned to visit the home of his ancestors in the tradition of his father, Richard J. Daley, who visited in 1965 and had a wood planted in his honor.

The Mayor and his party were welcomed by An t-Athair O Dálaigh, the parish priest, who spoke first in Irish, saying this was the language Daley's family would have used in the days before they migrated. The Daley name, he told the presumably gratified Mayor, was one associated with literature and poetry in Ireland. Indeed it was. A reprehensible O Dálaigh poet who died in 1617 exacted free bed and board under threat of satiric sanction (an aggressive strategy *Nation* writers might care to emulate). Inhospitality he rewarded with relentlessly satirical verses. O Dálaigh was consequently welcomed out of fear. Seeing the Mayor bridle somewhat at the implication, the priest added hastily, "But that is not only why we welcome you today."

Their Miners and Ours—II

I recently contrasted American press coverage of the strikes by coal miners in the United States and the Soviet Union. Shortly after, there arrived this interesting communication from Joel Swartz of St. Paul, who kindly gives permission for it to be cited here. Like me, Swartz thought the press had systematically neglected the workers' strike at the Pittston mines in Virginia while inundating the citizenry with details of the miners' strike in the Soviet Union. To test that impression he conducted an informal poll in the Twin Cities. He asked two questions. The first invited people to pick from a list those countries that had had major coal strikes in the past month. (The choices were the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and Iran.) The second asked them to name those countries in which the union leaders had been imprisoned. He reports:

"I polled a total of 100 people in St. Paul and Minneapolis in early August. This was a few weeks after the Soviet coal strike had occurred. It was after the coal strike at Pittston had been going on for several months, and after there had been a support strike by some 40,000 miners in the Appalachian coal fields, and after three leaders of the U.M.W. had been imprisoned for several weeks.

"In the end 83 percent of those polled knew that there had been a coal strike in the Soviet Union, but only 28 percent knew that there was a coal strike in the United States; 34 percent thought that the leaders had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union, and 21 percent thought the mine workers' leaders had been imprisoned in this country. A quarter of those polled were delegates to the St. Paul Trades and Labor Council meeting. Of these delegates 56 percent knew that there was a coal strike in the United States, and 32 percent thought that the union leaders had been imprisoned in the United States. Of the folks who were not Trades and Labor delegates, and I tried hard to obtain a cross section of people in the area, only 16 percent knew that there was a coal strike in the United States.

"I also asked some people if they knew the issues at stake in the strikes. A few people knew some of the issues in the Soviet strike, but virtually no one knew the major issues in the Pittston strike.

"The reactions of some respondents were interesting. A number of people were shocked and even outraged when told there was a coal miners strike in the United States. Many wondered how come they had not seen any reports of the strike on the news. When told that union leaders had been imprisoned in the United States but not in the Soviet Union, a number of folks responded with something like Edith Bunker's 'Ain't that something!'

"True, Minneapolis and St. Paul are 1,500 miles away from the Pittston coal fields in Virginia, but I think the people here need to know about one of the greatest mass movements of the past decade. They ought to know when a major corporation with much help from state police, various courts and the national labor board have mounted a vicious campaign to revert coal mining into a nonunion job. They ought to know when 40,000 miners shut down the Appalachian coal fields for two weeks. They ought to know when tens of thousands of miners and supporters have set up a solidarity camp to support the strike effort. They ought to know when thousands of state troopers, Federal marshals

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

and hired guns have turned western Virginia into an armed camp, and threatened the miners' civil rights—for instance, the right to drive a car near the mines. They ought to know when a Congressional subcommittee finds 'The combined presence of company security forces, state police and Federal marshals creates a sense that the coal fields are occupied by a massive security force.' In fact, these things are especially relevant in Minnesota now, as the Boise Cascade paper mill is trying to undertake a major expansion with nonunion labor, using scabs from the notorious B.E.&K. Construction Company.

"One other conclusion I got from doing the survey is that people can sometimes be manipulated into believing things that contradict their own experience. When I asked in which country had leaders of the mine workers' union been imprisoned, many people gave the Soviet Union as a knee-jerk reaction. They had been told that repression happens in the Soviet Union, not the United States. But when a number of people thought about it, they remembered that they had heard that strike leaders had been imprisoned in the United States."

Swartz concludes, "The Trades and Labor delegates were far more aware of the coal miners' strike than the average Twin Cities resident." Moral: "The only way to counter media lies is by engaging in mass political struggle."

So what does it take to get national attention for workers' struggles in the United States? (You know the answer. Hold the strikes in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe.) On September 21 the *People's Daily World* checked how much national coverage there had been of the workers' stunning occupation of Pittston's Moss 3 plant, discussed by Phill Kwik on page 409 of this issue of *The Nation.*

ABC, CBS and NBC said nothing on September 17, 18 or 19, although the miners had sent them a videotape of their action. (In the case of CBS, Dan Rather much prefers faked heroics of the mujahedeen to homemade workers' truths.) CNN and Headline News did no better. On September 17 and 18, A.P. and U.P.I. wire services carried no stories, only a photograph from U.P.I. There was nothing on September 18 in such papers as *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*.

Finally on September 19, more than forty hours after the takeover, A.P. carried a story, picked up by *The Washington Post*. The same day *USA Today* ran one sentence on the action. On September 20, *The Wall Street Journal* mentioned the takeover in one paragraph of a three-paragraph story. *The Times* reported the miners' leaving the plant.

The Eastern unionists in Miami, New York hospital workers officials and New York Telephone workers are all fighting for fair contracts, but when the *World* contacted them on September 19 none had heard about the Pittston takeover. There is nothing power fears so much as the cry of its foes, "We are not alone."

Cat's Paw

People have been asking me about Christopher Hitchens's odd remarks about me and Stalinism last week, and I tell them the truth, which is that much of Christopher's stuff lately has been written by a cat called Flashman.

For the past few months Hitchens has had occasion to do some of his writing in the basement of a house in Georgetown owned by some elderly and respectable relatives of mine. This same basement had hitherto been the exclusive lair of Flashman, a thoughtful creature, also of advancing years, now at work on his memoirs.

Flashman has known Hitchens for about a decade, has taken a fatherly interest in his career and, when times were hard, has shared with him his daily platter of Tender Vittles.

It won't have escaped the attentive reader that there has been something off-key about a few of Christopher's columns of late, and in a recent phone conversation with Flashman I learned the reason. He had, said Flashman, observed with mounting concern the harried demeanor of his overworked guest, sometimes overtaken by exhaustion even as the deadline neared. Several months ago, Flashman confessed, he had been sufficiently worried about imminent deadlines to "knock out" a column "the way Hitchens would probably have written it" and fax it up to *The Nation*. On awakening, Christopher had been tearfully grateful and had agreed that it should remain "our little secret." Having had a bit of help myself from Flashman a couple of times, I said I could understand the advantages of the arrangement.

Things had begun to go wrong, apparently, when Flashman had to work off some quick notes prepared for a column on abortion. Flashman swears that he correctly represented Hitchens's position, against a woman's right to choose. Hitchens angrily maintained that Flashman had missed certain essential nuances. At any rate, when readers' letters poured in by the sackful, Hitchens said that he would not defend what Flashman had written on his behalf. Flashman takes the view that this was merely an excuse for Christopher's inability to sustain a weak position.

Yes, Flashman conceded, he had written the column about me and Stalinism. Hitchens, more than usually harried, had implored him to fill in "just one more time." I told Flashman frankly that it wasn't one of his best efforts, being full of misrepresentations of one sort or another. Flashman agreed readily enough, saying he'd got "a bit punch-drunk" during his briefings with Hitchens. I was about to go into greater detail when Flashman said he had to get off the line to take a fax from Ben Sonnenberg's dog, Harry.

So there we have it. Flashy did say that from where he sat (under the bed much of the time), political doctrine mostly came down to what people did about their socks, and there are apparently things ex-Trotskyists do with theirs that are best left unmentioned. So as far as I'm concerned, Christopher should take time off, relax and remember that principles, which his column accused me of not having, are different from postures, which is what, these days, his column too often adopts.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ The War on What?

Whenever you hear George Bush boast about how he boldly sent $65 million in military aide to Colombia as part of his crusade against crack, remember Pablo Emilio Angarita. Angarita is the head of the Medellín-based Institute for Popular Empowerment, a human rights group known by its Spanish initials I.P.C. On September 8 military police arrested Angarita and three staff members—a law student, a literacy worker and a labor activist. The four were taken to a military police office, held incommunicado and tortured, according to the Latin American Institute for Alternative Legal Services, a regional human rights and legal association with which I.P.C. is affiliated. The four, who were picked up with twenty-four others in a sweep against drug traffickers, were subsequently accused of drug dealing. As we went to press the four were still being held.

This episode is but the latest indication that the war on drugs has given the Colombian military cover to go after political opponents. "Popular leaders, private volunteer organizations and human rights groups," the Latin American Institute notes, have become targets of "the supposed or real fight against drug trafficking." According to Jack Tobin, director of the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School, when the military police raided I.P.C., they seized a host of documents and videocassettes, including one videotape on the slain Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero and other church martyrs. That's some prize in Bush's war on drugs.

■ It Must Be the Poppies

Now turn to the matter of Afghanistan, which causes normally alert drug warriors to doze. The White House, the C.I.A. and Congressional supporters of the mujahedeen have been dickering over how best to arm the rebels. (Pro-rebel members of Congress have slammed the C.I.A. for not supplying more weapons than it already does.) Unmentioned in the debate is a dirty little fact: Areas controlled by the mujahedeen include some of the world's most fertile centers of opium production.

In March the United States officially asked the rebels to curb the soaring production of opium poppies. A State Department report issued at the time estimated that Afghanistan produced 700 to 800 metric tons of opium in 1988, most of it coming from territory in the hands of the mujahedeen. An update on the report, released in August, indicates there has been little if any progress, and notes that the return of millions of refugees will lead to a surge in opium production.

"We know there are commanders very much involved in opium, and we've tried to talk to the rebel political parties" based in Peshawar, Pakistan, says one State Department official. "But anyone we talk to is a few steps away from the commanders and doesn't have any control over them." While you ponder the Administration's inability to put pressure on U.S.-armed rebels, keep in mind that C.I.A. director William Webster has called his agency's support of the mujahedeen "one of the most successful operations in the country's history."

■ He's a Rebel

In a recent article in *The Washington Post*, Representative Bill McCollum, a mujahedeen cheerleader, presented the case against the C.I.A.'s handling of the rebels. He hit the Agency for too often deferring to the Pakistan intelligence service and complained that Pakistan's rebel leader of choice is the savage fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar, whose forces have attacked those allied with rival guerrilla leaders, has increasingly become a liability for rebel backers in Washington. Thus, McCollum praised Yunis Khalis, another fundamentalist party leader, who has called for more cooperation among the rebel factions, as a "public-spirited" leader and an alternative to Hekmatyar.

But McCollum's memory is short. Last November, when Khalis's forces closed in on Afghan troops guarding the town of Torkham, about seventy Afghan soldiers surrendered. Khalis's men executed the soldiers and dumped their bodies by the side of the road in tea crates.

■ Ayatollah From Orange County

Here on Capitol Hill we have our own fanatics, and chief among them is Representative William Dannemeyer, a Bible-thumping Republican from California. In June he took to the House floor to froth over the "homosexual movement." To enlighten his colleagues, he offered graphic descriptions of what he termed "activities peculiar to homosexuality," one of which involved a light bulb. He claimed the "average homosexual" man has 1,000 or more sexual partners in his lifetime and—hold on—has sex two or three times a week. Dannemeyer also revealed that the "homosexual movement" is a conspiracy that has its adherents "systematically" enter influential professional fields and is bent on destroying "the social foundation of America." He declared, "We must either defeat militant homosexuality or it will defeat us."

Bible Bill does more than emit hot air. Last summer he successfully led an effort to kill funding for a Federal survey on the sexual practices of Americans, which would have allowed health officials to track the course of the AIDS epidemic. He was reportedly worried that the survey would somehow inflate the number of gay and lesbian Americans.

More recently, Dannemeyer has gone after a report on teen suicide put out by the Department of Health and Human Services. What offended him was the report's conclusion that the "root problem of gay youth suicide is a society that discriminates against and stigmatizes homosexuals." He was repulsed by the report's call for laws safeguarding the rights of gay people. In a September 7 letter to President Bush, Dannemeyer demanded that Bush denounce this part of the report and fire all persons connected with it. No doubt they, too, are part of the conspiracy, against which Dannemeyer wages his taxpayer-supported holy war.

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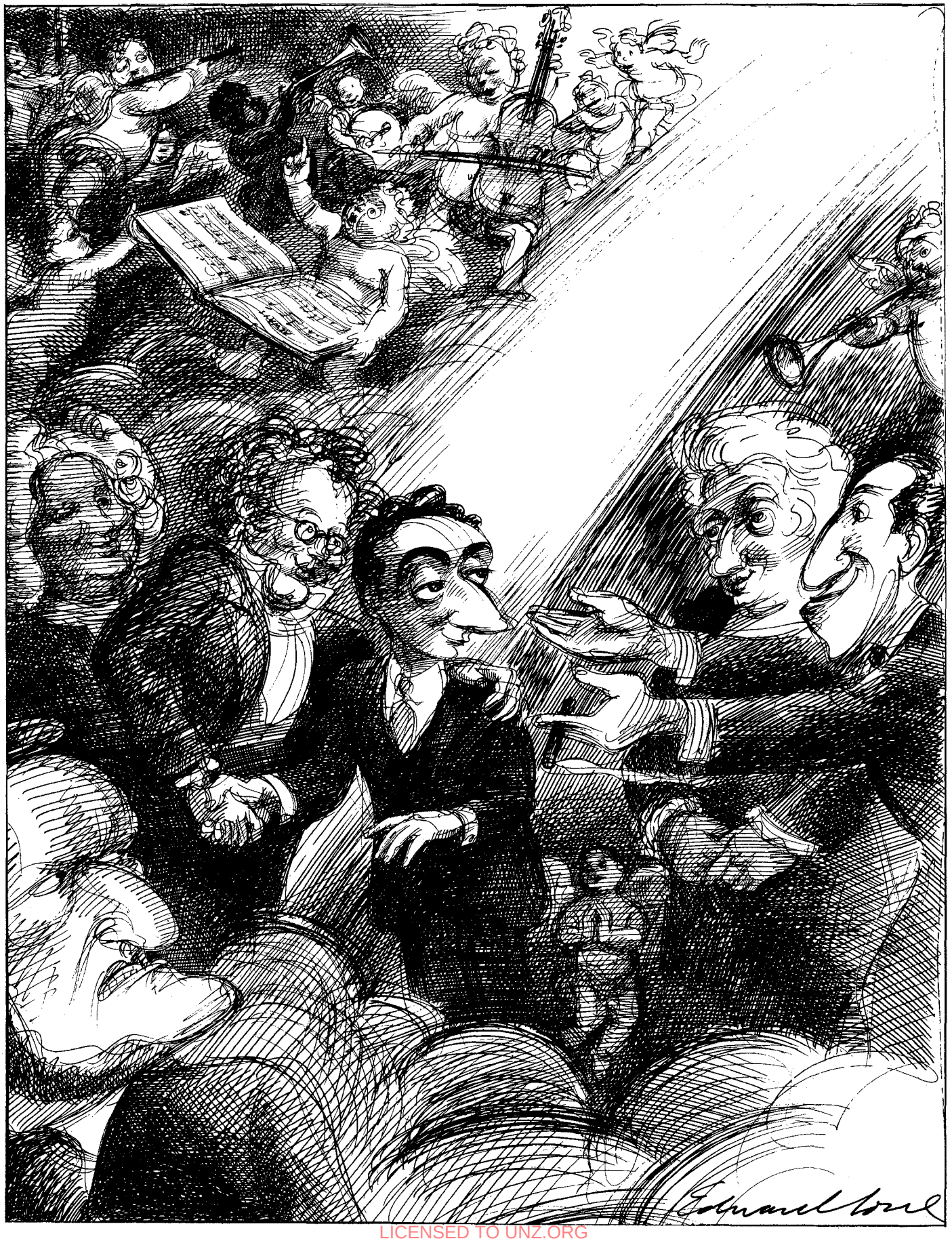
September 22, 1989

EDWARD SOREL



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ARTICLES.

RUSSIA AND IRAN MAKE UP

The Ayatollahs And the Bear

DILIP HIRO

Early in September, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Ali Mohammed Besharati, revealed that President George Bush had sent several letters addressed to "The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran" through the Swiss Embassy in Teheran, the most recent one in mid-August. Judging by its timing, that epistle was primarily concerned with the Western hostage crisis in Lebanon. But what drove the American President to make the earlier overtures to the Islamic Republic? The recent strengthening of ties between Teheran and Moscow, say most observers. The dreadful scenario of the commissar and the mullah joining hands to strangle the pro-American oil sheiks of the Arabian Peninsula seems to be materializing—so fear many of the strategic planners in the Pentagon and the State Department.

Meanwhile, there is the contrary pressure on the Bush Administration from the American public to deal harshly with Iran, the hated font of fanaticism and terrorism. Caught between these two irreconcilables, President Bush could only muddle through the recent crisis over the Western hostages held in Lebanon, blowing hot and cold on alternate days. The reason he could not take military action, he explained repeatedly, was that he lacked reliable information on the whereabouts of the hostages and their captors, and on the inner workings of the political establishments of their mentors, particularly the Iranians.

To show that the Administration had not been derelict in collecting intelligence on Iran, official sources broke with the tradition of the Reagan presidency and leaked a self-serving story to *The New York Times* in August about the doings of the Central Intelligence Agency in Iran. It said that the United States had planted a C.I.A. spy ring in the Iranian armed forces which had yielded a "valuable harvest of military intelligence, particularly about Iranian operations in the Persian Gulf at a time when American naval forces were confronting the Iranians." The ring was uncovered by Iran earlier this year.

Teheran's suspicions were aroused on the eve of former President Ali Khamenei's speech to the U.N. General Assembly on September 22, 1987, when the U.S. Navy conveniently captured an Iranian vessel laying mines in the gulf. That dramatic success was shown on American television networks hours before Khamenei's speech. Washington's plan seemed to be to make the Iranian President angry enough to tear up his measured speech and reject outright the U.N. Security Council cease-fire Resolution 598 of July 20, 1987—and thus, inadvertently, help the United States pave the way for a U.N. embargo against Iran. In any event, Khamenei kept his cool and maintained an equivocal stance toward Resolution 598.

According to the London *Observer*, the Iranians broke the U.S. ring with information provided to them by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, during his visit to Teheran in late February of this year (soon after the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Islamic revolution, when the 900 political prisoners released included Nureddin Kianouri, General Secretary of the banned Communist Tudeh Party). The intelligence had reached the K.G.B. in Moscow via the East German secret service, which had apparently been monitoring the activities of the C.I.A.'s Iran cell in Frankfurt.

The main purpose of Shevardnadze's visit was to convey General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's reply to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's letter of January 3. That message praised Gorbachev's "boldness and vigor in dealing with world realities," but criticized Communist atheism and advised the Soviet leader to "seriously inquire about Islam."

"We agree with many major points—but there are points with which we disagree, too," Gorbachev told Khomeini. He added that while Moscow respected freedom of choice for all nations and recognized the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet system was the right choice for its people in spite of "the gross errors" made in the past. On a more practical plane, he referred to the Soviet Union's "conviction that conditions are ripe for relations between our two countries to enter a qualitatively new stage of cooperation in all fields."

Welcoming this, Khomeini emphasized the importance of "expanding strong ties in various fields so as to confront the devilish acts of the West." He called on all foreign forces to withdraw from the Persian Gulf—a demand that the Kremlin has been making since the summer of 1987. In a sense, Shevardnadze's successful mission to Teheran set the stage for the Iranian leader's deathbed advice to his close aides: "Improve relations with the northern neighbor" (i.e., the Soviet Union).

Little wonder, then, that within a few weeks of Khomeini's death, on June 3, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, then speaker of the Iranian Parliament, dashed off to Moscow. There he had several long and friendly meetings with Gorbachev. The two leaders signed a whole range of Iranian-Soviet agreements—diplomatic, economic and military.

It is worth noting that Iran strengthened its ties with the Soviet Union without compromising its commitment to furthering Islam and Islamic interests. Referring to "the new thinking in the Soviet Union on the one hand and the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran on the other," the preamble to the Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation Agreement signed by both sides specifically calls for more contacts and

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Dilip Hiro is the author of Iran Under the Ayatollahs *(Routledge, Chapman & Hall). His forthcoming book,* Holy Wars: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism, *will be published on October 16 by Routledge.*

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exchanges between religious leaders in the two countries.

The first such exchange took place when Rafsanjani, a religious leader in his own right, visited Baku, the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan and home to some 6 million Moslems of Shiite background. The Kremlin thus established its sincerity about implementing this aspect of the agreement. In return, Gorbachev reportedly got a promise from Rafsanjani to cease fanning the flame of Islamic fundamentalism among the Moslems of Soviet Central Asia. In practice, this means Iran will stop fundamentalist radio broadcasts beamed at the southern Soviet republics. Since Rafsanjani's brother is the director general of the state-owned radio and television network, this should prove to be a fairly simple act.

If challenged, leaders such as Rafsanjani would advance the argument of noninterference in the internal affairs of another sovereign state. Moreover, they would argue, continued broadcasts might jeopardize the prospect of further contacts, religious or otherwise, between the peoples of Iranian and Soviet Azerbaijan. Finally, as Rafsanjani has subsequently made clear, Moscow's good will is essential in securing overall peace in the region, since the Russians are the main outside players in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The scale of the economic and trade agreements between the two neighbors, lasting until the end of the century, is noteworthy. The deals are worth $6 billion, with the Iranians paying for the Soviet-equipped factories by exporting to the Soviet Union up to 3 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually. Moscow needs this fuel badly because supplies from Afghanistan are down from 2.6 billon cubic meters a year to 1.2 billion. Iran is in dire need of foreign currencies to finance its essential imports and reconstruction projects. The idea of a railway connecting northeast Iran with Soviet Turkmenistan is to be pursued actively, providing a second such link between the two states.

The two countries will jointly build seven hydroelectric dams on five Iranian rivers, and will engage in cooperative oil exploration in the Caspian Sea. By setting up new electric power plants and boosting the ones in Esfahán and Ahvaz, the Soviet-aided plans will add 8,000 megawatts to the Iranian national grid. The 6,000 megawatts that Iran currently produces fall short of the country's annual need of 7,000 megawatts and is a major reason that Iranian industry is now running, by official accounts, "below half of its capacity."

The Russians also offered to assist Iran in improving its military capabilities. During the eight-year gulf war, Iran acquired a great deal of Soviet or Soviet-designed weapons and ammunition from Syria, Libya and North Korea, so a military agreement with Moscow will improve the morale of its armed forces.

From the Gorbachev Administration's standpoint, the wide-ranging agreements with Iran are useful in demonstrating to the world that it has shorn its ideological foreign policy and that it is able to have cordial relations with all kinds of regimes. Considerations of national security were also involved. The Soviet Union was eager for a rapprochement with a country with which it shares its second longest border (1,200 miles), and which underwent a revolution a decade ago. The Kremlin is also deeply troubled by the continued crisis in Afghanistan, another state along its southern border, and it needs Iran's assistance in resolving that.

Gorbachev reportedly urged Rafsanjani to persuade the alliance of eight Afghan Shiite rebel groups based in Teheran to open direct talks with the Najibullah regime in Kabul. The differences between this coalition and the Islamic Alliance of Afghan Mujahedeen (backed by the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and composed of seven Sunni groups) had proved irreconcilable, with the Teheran-based parties refusing to recognize the interim government of the mujahedeen alliance.

Although Rafsanjani failed to oblige Gorbachev during their Moscow meetings, the situation has since altered in favor of the Soviet Union. By early August, when Shevardnadze met with his Iranian counterpart in Teheran, Soviet aid was beginning to have an impact on Iran's shattered economy. After their cordial talks, the two ministers called for a cease-fire in the Afghan civil war, an international peace conference and an intra-Afghan dialogue. To encour-

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age that process of dialogue, the Rafsanjani administration stopped its weapons shipments to the Afghan Shiite guerrillas based in Teheran. These guerrillas have now contacted the noncommunist elements in the Najibullah government, which, in turn, has offered to establish an autonomous Shiite region in the central Hazarajat highlands.

With Soviet officials routinely describing the ruling People's Democratic Party as progressive nationalist rather than Marxist, Iran's leaders seem hopeful of weaning Najibullah and his colleagues away from secularism. After all, the December 1987 Constitution of Afghanistan declares Islam to be the official religion. The state is heavily engaged in a program of mosque building and renovation. And Najibullah never misses a chance to manifest his piety in public. In his letter to Gorbachev, Khomeini referred to the failure of the atheist state in the Soviet Union to destroy Islam. "When recently after seventy years the mosques in some Soviet republics echoed the call for prayer with cries of Allah-o Akbar ["God is great"], it brought tears of joy from the followers of the genuine Islam of Mohammed," he wrote. If that was the case in some Soviet republics after seventy years, the ten-year Marxist experience in Afghanistan could hardly have much of an effect on the strength of Islam in Afghanistan, he seemed to have concluded.

Two major developments point toward stronger ties between Iran and the Soviet Union. One is the renewed drive in the Islamic Republic, inspired by Khomeini before his death, to reverse the process of rapprochement with Britain and the United States that emerged in the wake of the gulf war cease-fire—and to eradicate the last vestiges of American influence in Iran, as exemplified by the arrest of the C.I.A.-controlled spy ring.

The second development is the fundamental changes that the Soviet state and society are currently undergoing, accompanied by an easing of the official hostility toward religion, especially Islam. These changes open up possibilities of further cooperation and friendship between Moscow and Teheran. □

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FARMERS & ENVIRONMENTALISTS

The Attraction Is Chemical

JIM SCHWAB

An emerging alliance between progressive farm and environmental groups promises to reshape the national debate over farm policy. A growing ecological awareness among farmers portends the same political potency that blue-collar and labor-union concern about toxic waste brought to previous environmental crusades. Squeezed hard by low farm prices and rising costs for the chemical inputs of conventional agriculture, farmers are demonstrating a serious new interest in alternative, low-chemical methods of farming. And they also worry increasingly about the long-term health and environmental effects of chemical agriculture, from which they suffer very directly. Conservationists, meanwhile, are seeking new allies as they begin to take note of agriculture's serious impact on the environment. Finally, consumer concerns such as those created by the controversy over Alar, a ripener used on apples, have heightened marketplace pressures on farmers and food vendors to offer chemical-free products.

In some ways, it is surprising that this awareness took so long to materialize. In recent decades the impact of American farming on the environment has been staggering. The Department of Agriculture estimates, for instance, that up to 400,000 acres of wetlands are disappearing annually; agriculture is a prime violator since farm operators drain these wetlands to plant additional acres. Some Midwestern states have lost 90 percent of their original wetlands. Wetlands serve a vital ecological purpose, acting both as a natural sponge along riverbeds to prevent downstream flooding and as a wildlife habitat, especially for migratory birds.

Soil erosion is also reaching disastrous levels after five decades of relatively ineffectual efforts by the Soil Conservation Service, which is largely dependent on voluntary cooperation by farmers. The service estimates that some 5.4 billion tons of soil on private land erodes every year. But 45 percent of that erosion occurs on just 10 percent of U.S. cropland because, until recently, there was no way to constrain farmers from planting on the most highly erodible, vulnerable land. Those who participated in conservation programs tended not to plant on such land in the first place.

There has been a massive expansion of chemical farming methods since World War II. Farmers spread about 375,000 tons of pesticides on the land yearly, only one one-thousandth of which actually kills pests. Farmers spend $5.9 billion annually on this dubious exercise, and another $4.6 billion on fertilizer. According to the U.S.D.A.'s Economic Research

Jim Schwab is assistant editor of Planning *and the author of* Raising Less Corn and More Hell, *an oral history of the farm crisis published last year by University of Illinois Press.*

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Saving the Land

The corn cobs stacked against the adobe wall of Talavaya Center in New Mexico are like no corn you have seen before; their kernels are the color of garnet, amethyst, lapis lazuli. These are the ancient grains of the Southwest: Navaho Pink, Hopi Purple, Taos Blue. In 1985 the Talavaya Center received a United Nations Environmental Program (U.N.E.P.) award for its efforts to save from extinction the native seed crops and agricultural techniques that have been in use in this region for a thousand years. Their efforts are part of the most significant trend in agriculture today: the sustainable agriculture movement.

As its name implies, the movement intends to create a lasting agriculture, one that is largely independent of the diminishing resource of fossil fuel, that does not destroy, as conventional industrial agriculture does, the human and natural resources upon which it depends. Sustainable agriculture emphasizes the use of internal resources—the natural intelligence of human and biological systems—rather than the external inputs that characterize conventional agriculture.

The movement is a response to the global industrialization of farming that has taken place over the past century, particularly the Green Revolution, which has eroded the genetic pool and created a globally uniform agriculture. It is a fight against industrial society's tendency to homogenize agriculture and human culture.

The movement has been brewing for more than a decade, but only recently has it gained acceptance by the agricultural establishment and conventional farmers. Last year, for the first time, the U.S.D.A. provided $3.9 million to support research and education into low-input sustainable agriculture for some forty-nine projects across the country. At a time when funding for many agricultural programs is being reduced, Congress has already approved $4.45 million to fund research this year. Senator Patrick Leahy has suggested that the next Congressional budget increase funding to $15 million for 1990. At major universities across the country, such as the University of Minnesota, chairs have been established for sustainable agriculture, and many government departments, including the U.S.D.A., now have sustainable agriculture programs.

Practices differ widely. In California's Sacramento Valley, commercial rice farmer Dick Harter has doubled the annual yield on his 900-acre Cherokee Ranch, and he brought wildlife back by giving up conventional farming practices in favor of the "natural" or "do-nothing" techniques of Japanese agronomist Masanobu Fukuoka. Natural farming, which Fukuoka describes in his book *The One Straw Revolution*, eschews plowing, weeding, artificial fertilization and spraying so that human interference in the natural system is minimized. By using crop rotation to enrich and hold the soil, and by allowing natural predators to control pests, Fukuoka and Harter are restoring the natural balance of the land.

At the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, plant geneticist Wes Jackson is developing a new kind of agriculture on the Great Plains. In place of the erosion-prone monocultures of corn and wheat that dominate this region, Jackson is cultivating perennial prairie plants such as Eastern Gama Grass on his 275-acre farm in an effort to develop crops that will use the natural attributes of the prairie while producing grain for livestock and human consumption.

In New Mexico, the site of some of the oldest continuous agriculture in the nation, researchers at the Ghost Ranch High Desert Research Farm in Abiquiu, northwest of Santa Fe, are learning from the past. At an elevation of 6,500 feet, in an area of poor soil and little precipitation, O.J. Lougheed and Lynda Prim are using ancient techniques such as the Zuni waffle garden and grains suited to traditional methods of hand harvesting to preserve both a cultural and a genetic heritage. But it is their work with crops suited to arid and semiarid conditions, such as tepary beans, which can grow in soil temperatures of 170 degrees with just two and a half inches of annual rainfall, that may prove to be the most significant.

What these diverse agriculturists have in common is an awareness that conventional fossil fuel–based farming cannot last. In contrast to industrial agriculture, which has focused on developing universally applicable methods, sustainable agriculture emphasizes place-specific agriculture and an ethic of land stewardship that requires an intimate understanding of the particular piece of land being farmed.

"Learning to farm is learning to farm *a farm*," philosopher-farmer Wendell Berry has said. "Not learning a bunch of universally applicable rules."

Fundamental to the sustainable agriculture movement is the belief that farming is a cultural activity, not just a means of producing food. Agriculture is as significant to the shaping of civilization as the food it produces is to sustaining it, for it is through agriculture that humans define and understand their relationship to the earth. In his book-length essay, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, Berry eloquently summarized the significance of this relationship: "A farm, as a human artifact, is inseparable from the mind that makes and uses it. The two are one. To destroy this union—as industrial agriculture now threatens to do irreparably—is to damage human culture at its root."

ELLEN LEVY

Ellen Levy is a writer based in New Mexico.

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Service, 1,437 counties in the nation—home to 50 million Americans—have potentially contaminated drinking water because of nitrates and pesticides seeping into ground water. Although integrated pest management, a farming technique that relies on natural biological control of crop pests, has been able to reduce pesticide use on test plots of cotton by 88 percent, such alternatives to chemical farming have yet to catch on [see Ellen Levy's report, page 418].

A farm-environmental alliance was waiting to happen, but it began to take shape only after John O'Connor, executive director of the Boston-based National Toxics Campaign, took the lead last fall. Working as a bridge between progressive farm groups and environmental groups, the N.T.C. drafted a program to meet the concerns of both groups simultaneously. Its coalition report, "Shadow on the Land," was endorsed by Ralph Nader and several Nader-related groups, the Environmental Policy Institute and agricultural groups such as the American Agricultural Movement and the North American Farm Alliance. Farmers, the report argued, need higher Federal price supports in order to escape the financial pressures forcing them toward poor environmental practices. Shifting to low-chemical agriculture is necessary, but farmers need financial and technical support to make a successful transition from dependence on chemical inputs. Pressure to overwork the land can be reduced through controls on production, the N.T.C. concluded, but such controls must accompany a long-term program to reorient public agricultural research and to reform Federal regulations that now encourage, rather than discourage, excessive reliance on chemicals.

For decades, agribusiness interests have dominated the farm policy debate, to the dismay of family-farm groups. But the strategic agreement that the Toxics Campaign is trying to forge could tilt the balance when the 1985 Food Security Act, the current farm program, expires next year. That measure established environmentalists as a new force to be reckoned with in farm policy. As a result of lobbying by the American Farmland Trust and the Natural Resources Defense Council, "sodbusting," the plowing of fragile woodlands or grasslands, and "swampbusting," the draining or destruction of wetlands for crop production, were legally restricted for the first time. A conservation reserve was created into which farmers could "retire" marginal or highly erodible acres from production in exchange for Federal payments. And—most important—Federal crop subsidies were tied to approval of a soil conservation plan for highly erodible land to be submitted by 1990.

The National Family Farm Coalition, the main group seeking higher crop prices and mandatory production controls—the prime goals of Iowa Senator Tom Harkin's Family Farm Act—was sorely disappointed with the 1985 bill. Under the Harkin plan, farmers growing certain storable commodities, such as wheat, would have voted on mandatory production cutbacks for all farmers in exchange for higher price supports for their product. Instead, farmers got more of what Congress had dished out in the 1981 program—lower price supports aimed at stimulating exports, geared to the Reagan philosophy that the free market would solve both America's

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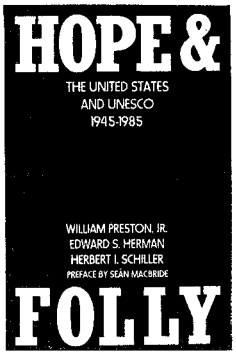

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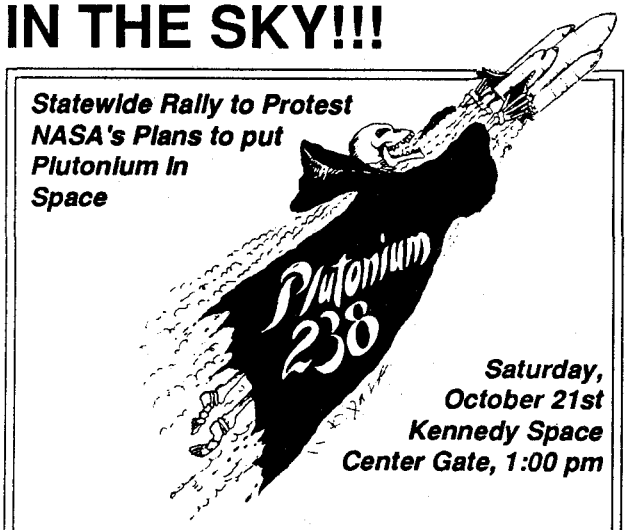
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and the world's farm problems. Under intense pressure from financially strapped farmers, the Reagan Administration's initial proposal for an immediate transition to the free market was quickly ruled out as politically infeasible. Opinion polls showed the general public sympathetic to the problems of struggling farmers. Harkin and his supporters resigned themselves to gearing up for a long struggle with agribusiness and the more conservative farm and commodity groups.

The result was an awkward compromise. Price supports were lowered, resulting in lower market prices. But target prices, set by Congress, were largely held constant, with scheduled decreases. The gap between target and market prices determines the "deficiency" payment the government makes to farmers who participate in acreage set-aside programs. (For instance, a market price of $1.65 a bushel for corn, with a target price of $2.75, would produce a subsidy to participating farmers of $1.10 a bushel.) Lowering the floor in price supports simply widened the gap and raised the program's cost from $5 billion, when Reagan first took office, to $13 billion in 1988.

Ironically, as hard-pressed farmers have increased their dependence on these payments, the Federal government's role in agriculture has broadened, not shrunk as Reagan intended. Most net farm income now comes from Federal payments. Reaganomics has backfired. And its price tag alone has led to an observation common among environmentalists: If farmers receive such extensive subsidies, they should be treated like any other polluter—which can only mean more government regulation.

The resulting bitterness among farmers—who see 1985 environmental controls in place but nothing to stop the hemorrhaging of family farms—might not be expected to augur well for any coalition between farmers and environmentalists. Even worse, many environmentalists still harbor images of farmers as resistant to their concerns. For years legislators have faced stiff opposition from major farm groups to measures addressing ecological problems. The American Farm Bureau Federation, the conservative leader among general-purpose farm groups, considers any environmental regulation an intrusion on farmers' freedom to operate as they see fit. Its president, Dean Kleckner, says that tying farm program benefits to conservation introduces a "social agenda" into farm policy. (However, there is a growing concern within the ranks of the Farm Bureau about the use of chemicals.)

But what looked like an impasse to others looked like an opportunity to the National Toxics Campaign, says O'Connor, who concluded after two years of studying the issue that "pushing family farmers off the land will be an environmental disaster." The N.T.C. sees family farmers as caught in a "chemical treadmill" not of their own making, which impels them to use greater amounts of pesticides just to stay economically viable. Species of insects and weeds become resistant to pesticides over time, requiring ever greater chemical inputs to achieve the same control. But farmers who simply abandon this procedure risk abandoning the farm as well, for conversion to a nonchemical operation takes time, and immediate yields can plunge before recovering. In the meantime, debts must be paid.

Then there is another problem: price pressures to increase the use of nitrogen fertilizer. According to North American Farm Alliance activist George Naylor, of Churdan, Iowa, as long as farmers can produce an unlimited quantity of grain for the market, they tend to increase fertilizer inputs in hopes of marginally increasing output. Although farmers have a ceiling, based on past production, on the bushels for which they can receive target prices, they can sell any production above that level on the market, which generally offers at least as much as the current loan rate. Suppose a farmer might ordinarily apply 150 pounds of nitrogen per acre to his fields. Naylor notes that this farmer could use fifty extra pounds per acre of nitrogen, at a cost of 10 cents per pound, in a gamble that good weather could yield up to twenty extra bushels per acre of corn. At the loan rate of $1.65, that luck would add $33 per acre to his gross income, meaning that even one such lucky year in six would pay for the extra nitrogen inputs. Even a modest additional yield—say, three or four bushels—would at least break even. But in years with poor rains, most of that nitrogen would find its way into the local ground water as nitrate contaminants. For farmers with heavy debts, this gamble would make perfect short-term sense. What the N.T.C. argues is that production controls (along with financial and technical support) can break this chemical dependency. If farmers were offered higher loan rates under the Harkin plan—say $3 per bushel, but with production restricted—the economic imperative to lay waste to the land would reverse itself. A farmer entitled to sell 120 bushels per acre from 200 acres would earn a maximum gross income of $72,000. The issue then would be not how much extra chemical fertilizer would be worth the gamble but how little farmers could use to achieve the allowable production for sale.

But such logic was disregarded by environmental lobbyists in the 1985 farm bill debate, causing Dixon Terry, then-president of the National Family Farm Coalition, to charge that the environmentalists' attention to sodbusting and swampbusting ignored the family farm's demise. Terry, who operated an organic dairy farm until he was struck and killed by lightning this past spring, regarded ecological reasons as "among the best" for mandatory production controls, arguing that they "require all farmers to do their fair share" to balance supply and demand and to reduce production pressures. As an important backer of the N.T.C.'s campaign, the coalition's task now is to attract to the new alliance environmental leaders who remain unconvinced that mandatory production ceilings are an effective answer to agriculture's environmental problems.

Among those is Justin Ward, agricultural policy specialist with the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington. Ward did not unequivocally oppose the initial Harkin plan, but he disagrees with what he perceives as an "unqualified endorsement of mandatory supply control as the definitive presciption for environmentally sound sustainable agriculture" offered by "Shadow on the Land." Like many envi-

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ronmental groups, N.R.D.C., tackled farm issues for the first time with the 1985 Food Security Act, lobbying for its conservation provisions, and Ward says it is still "sorting out" the issues surrounding commodity program reform. He feels that supply management may not sufficiently encourage environmentally beneficial crop rotations. For the moment, he prefers a measure introduced by Georgia Senator Wyche Fowler that would protect crop acreage allotments of farmers who choose environmentally beneficial crop rotations, such as planting nonprogram crops that fix nitrogen and conserve soil, and would offer higher target prices and lower crop insurance premiums as incentives for people who "incur the risks" of the transition to low-chemical agriculture.

Ward questions the assumption that family farmers are inherently better stewards of the environment, which illustrates an interesting divide between those environmental groups who signed on early with N.T.C.'s report and those who are holding back. But that notion is virtually an article of faith among progressive farm groups. Helen Waller, former president of the National Family Farm Coalition and now chair of its agricultural policy committee, suggests that environmentalists with doubts "come out to a place like Kansas to see foreclosed family farms whose forty-year-old terraces have been torn down by insurance companies exploiting the land through short-term tenants."

Environmental groups that have joined the family farm movement in recognizing the urgency of the economic issues tend to be both newer—born of the post-1960s wave of environmental activism—and more rooted in progressive social causes than the older, more purely conservation-oriented organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Izaak Walton League.

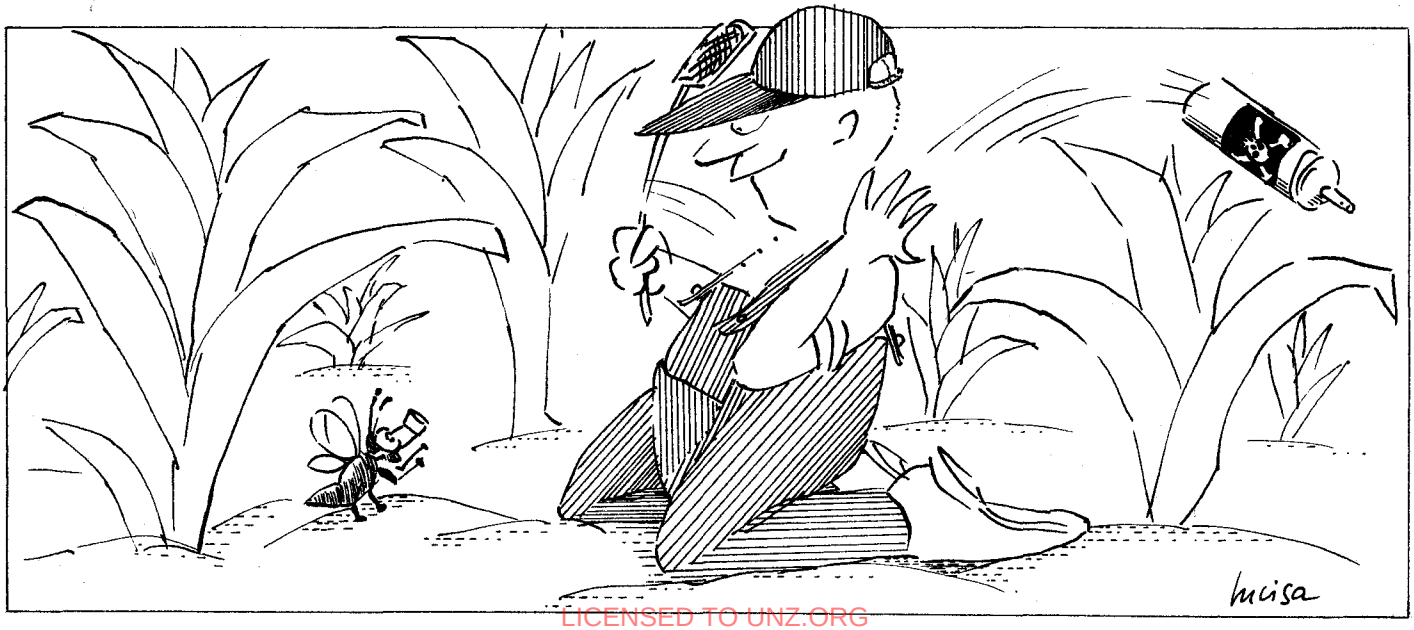
As with all coalitions, however, the political acid test will come in determining what the various groups can do for one another that each one could not have done separately. The tradeoffs seem quite simple. R. Keith Stroup, former legal counsel for the League of Rural Voters, says that farmers have had little clout in the past with members of the House and Senate environmental committees, but that conservation lobbyists who understand agriculture can help to shape realistic solutions to rural environmental problems before those committees. Recently, for example, environmental and farm groups working in cooperation played a critical role in the revision of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, under which most pest control products are regulated.

Progressive farm groups also know that they need new allies even within the agriculture committees because of the well-financed array of lobbyists who will be fighting any combination of high price supports and production controls that the progressive alliance may propose. Arguments about the environmental responsibility of such a program may win some converts among those in Congress who are not swayed by purely economic appeals.

But environmentalists have not always met with success among farm state legislators, who in the past have feared attacks from the Farm Bureau and commodity trade groups. Stroup and David Senter, national director of the American Agriculture Movement, both suggest that farm groups backing environmental measures provide some protection for those legislators by allowing them to point to farmer support on such issues.

The final test will be whether this coalition succeeds at the ballot box. Last November's Iowa state legislative races may offer one indication. Representative David Osterberg, a Democrat from a largely rural district, notes that chemical companies tried to defeat five Democrats (including himself) and one Republican, all of whom led the fight to pass Iowa's strict new ground water bill. The scorecard: All the Democrats won, and although the Republican incumbent was defeated in the primary by a challenger backed by the chemical industry, he was in turn beaten by his Democratic opponent, enhancing a strong Democratic House majority. Representative Paul Johnson of Decorah, in the rural northeastern part of the state, a perennial legislative leader on environmental issues, won more handily than ever.

"Minus one for six," says Osterberg with a wry smile. □



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Prizes

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

outsiders, troublemaking movement leaders—not elected officials and certainly not career politicians. But it is the sorry doings of just such prominent black career politicians that have recently dominated public attention.

The names of Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley; Washington Mayor Marion Barry; Detroit Mayor Coleman Young; Atlantic City Mayor William Espy; Illinois Congressman Gus Savage; Betty Dixon, the wife of House Ethics Committee chair Julian Dixon; former HUD chief Samuel Pierce; Commissioner Reginald Eaves in Fulton County, Georgia; and former Cleveland Mayor, now Judge, Carl Stokes are among those who have been the subject of scandal, criminal investigations and charges of conflict of interest. Others such as California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, former Chicago Mayor Eugene Sawyer and his challenger, Alderman Tim Evans, have escaped outright scandal but have been charged with complacency and the pursuit of their own narrow interests.

Dismal as the picture is, corruption and complacency among a handful, even a hundred, of the black political elite does not a crisis make. The real crisis in black politics today is based on the widening chasm between the ambitions of black officeholders and the needs of their urban constituents, particularly the poor. Eighty-two percent of black Americans now live in urban areas. David Swinton, an economist at Jackson State University, writes in the National Urban League's *State of Black America 1989* report that "fully one-third of black persons live in households with incomes below the poverty level. The proportions were even higher for black children, who experienced a poverty rate of 45.1 percent."

Like other incumbents, black public officials seek to maintain their grip on elected office. Most of them have paltry records for organizing in the black community on vital issues, and few are visible in the community except at election time. The result is that twenty-five years of black electoral gains from the civil rights movement have produced a shortage of political leadership for black constituents.

With one or two notable exceptions, black political representation has peaked. According to the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, at present there are 6,829 black elected officials nationwide, including 301 mayors. That is a great many, especially considering that before the 1965 Voting Rights Act there were only 500 such officials. But, as Clarence Lusane wrote in the January/February 1989 issue of *The Black Scholar*, "the rate of growth of black elected officials has slowed to a crawl" because "blacks have nearly exhausted the political jurisdictions where a black majority voting population exists." This is significant because there are too few blacks who have been elected in districts where blacks were less than a majority of the voters—Tom Bradley being the best-known example. Barring some change in public attitudes, white majorities simply won't elect minority politicians. And the rapidly shifting demography of some regions promises to erode further the ability of blacks to get elected.

Black politicians gained office as a direct result of the civil rights movement. But the moral engine that helped drive a generation into public office has stalled, leaving these officeholders and the communities they represent adrift. In the post-civil rights era the black community has become essentially demobilized. The dubious ethics of some politicians is a sign of this decline.

Few black leaders are willing to grapple publicly with the legitimate issues raised by the charges of corruption and complacency. Instead, many have reacted defensively with cries of "racism" and "scapegoating." Such responses ring true because historically U.S. political life has been an exercise in racial exclusion. So these leaders, and the political establishment they are a part of, insulate themselves. They tiptoe around the phenomenon of black politics as if it were a newborn. As a result, the concerns of the community become subordinate to their own electoral shelf life.

Even the most progressive and energetic black leaders have remained silent on the issue of black political corruption. Consider the case of Jesse Jackson. The current situation provides him with an opportunity to challenge the complacency of his compeers and distinguish himself. But it remains to be seen whether Jackson will raise this issue if he runs for Mayor of Washington. Jackson's silence is not entirely surprising. He has become entrenched in the brotherhood of black leadership, a traditional hierarchy that has learned to shield itself through hostile racial times. He cannot attack this hierarchy directly because he is a product of it.

Jackson's two presidential campaigns were the offspring of twenty-five years of maturing black voting strength. The thousands of black elected officials already in place made the Jackson campaigns possible. Without this sturdy infrastructure, his efforts would have been inconceivable. His unprecedented presidential campaigns were the civil rights movement's electoral pinnacle.

Jackson and other progressive black politicians (like California State Assemblywoman Maxine Waters, Representatives Ron Dellums and Major Owens) live, as it were, in two worlds. There is the centuries-old habitat of the black struggle for equality and enfranchisement, rooted in the South. And there is the new environment in the cities of poverty, community demobilization and political improbity which is still evolving.

Because the South was the bulwark of black oppression in this country, it has set the agenda of national black politics for two centuries. Black political leaders knew that as long as Southern white supremacy prevailed, black life everywhere was precarious. Because of this necessary Southern emphasis, the fight against racial terror and segregation and for civil rights—through the peaceful method of "moral suasion"—became the overriding themes of black politics.

There have been repeated challenges to this theme. At the National Negro Convention in Buffalo in 1843, Henry Highland Garnet stunned the traditional black leadership by

Susan Anderson is a Los Angeles–based writer who has long been involved in black politics.

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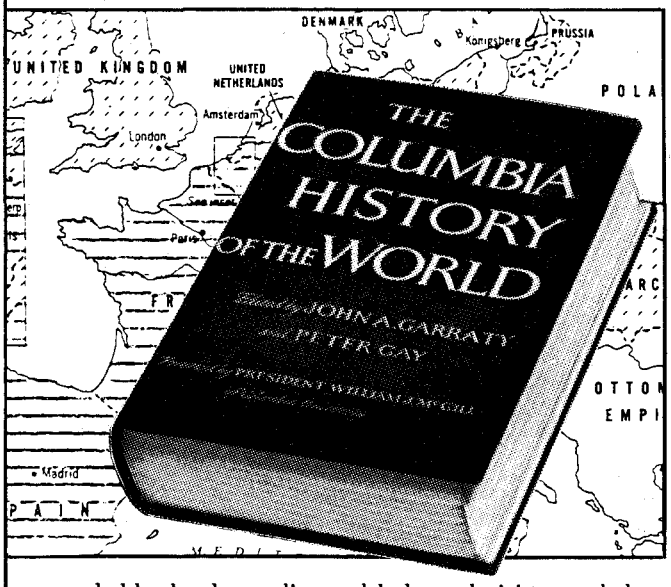

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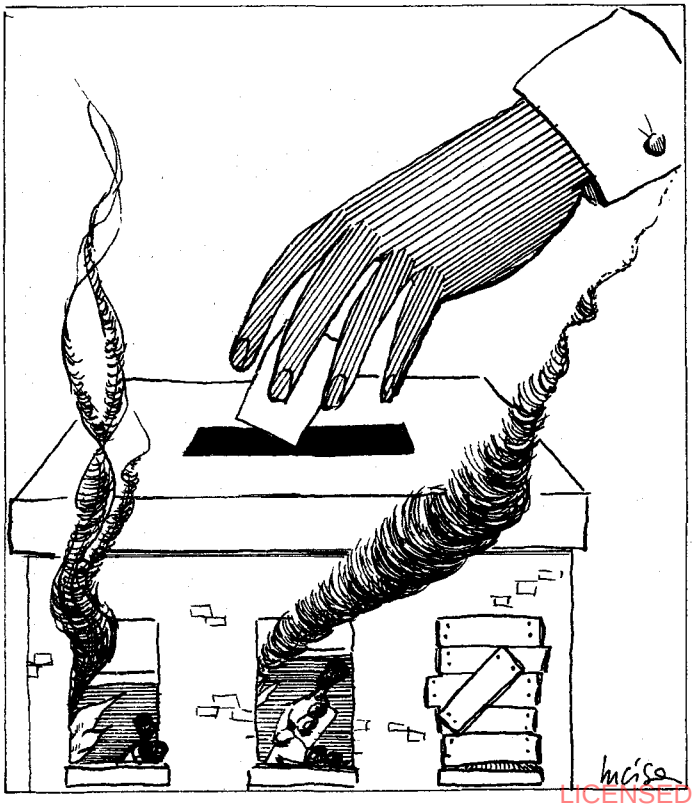
advocating armed uprising for the Southern slaves. "Your condition does not absolve you from your moral obligation. . . . If you must bleed, let it all come at once—rather die freemen, than live to be slaves. . . . let your motto be resistance!" Garnet's proposal to emulate Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and Joseph Cinque failed by one vote.

By the early twentieth century, black socialists, communists and nationalist economic thinkers also challenged the central racial theme of black politics. Their arguments remained marginal until the extreme dislocation of black life during the Depression made it seem possible that the black historical project would take a turn toward new considerations.

The Amenia Conference was held by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1933 to discuss the critique of its program by disaffected young leaders. Disillusioned with the group's approach to black "betterment," a new generation of black intellectuals, including Ralph Bunche, economist Abram Harris, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and writer Sterling Brown criticized the N.A.A.C.P.'s program as inappropriate at a time when "economic, political and social values are rapidly shifting, and the very structure of organized society is being revamped." The Amenia Conference suggested that the N.A.A.C.P. alter its "middle-class" pursuit of civil rights to an economic campaign for "the downtrodden mass." Participants strongly advocated building closer ties with organized labor to develop joint economic efforts. However, the N.A.A.C.P. did not change its course. The only concrete result of this discussion was that it escalated the philosophical brawl between W.E.B. Du Bois and Walter White, leading to Du Bois's resignation from the N.A.A.C.P. journal, *The Crisis*.

Following the Depression and especially during World War II, the black population migrated to the cities at a tremendous rate; this relocation would continue for a generation. Even as the civil rights movement reached its zenith in the dramatic Southern confrontations of the 1950s and 1960s, black urban resettlement continued. This exodus and the accumulation of blacks in the cities led to a period of transition as the movement's Southern-based concerns came into conflict with the urban North's realities.



That period may have begun in California in 1965, when Martin Luther King visited Los Angeles in response to the Watts riot—the largest and bloodiest uprising at the time. Although King had succeeded in transplanting the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to Los Angeles two years earlier, that did not prevent the poorest in the black community from igniting and stoking the Watts conflagration. When King was heckled at the Westminster Community Center, and when an unemployed rioter told a stunned King on a devastated ghetto sidewalk that "we won," the Southern premise of the civil rights movement became obsolete. In the words of Bayard Rustin, King himself was "undone." After Watts, the burning continued in U.S. cities.

It is a fitting vindication of the civil rights movement that the most dramatic restructuring of race in electoral politics took place in the South. The largest number of black elected officials (4,400) is concentrated in that region. According to the Joint Center for Political Studies, most are in the Deep-South states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia and Alabama. And, although it was unthinkable a generation ago, it will probably be the South that elects the first black governor, most likely Lieut. Gov. Doug Wilder in Virginia or outgoing Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young in Georgia. Sadly, the civil rights movement in the 1960s, like the N.A.A.C.P. in the 1930s, was unable to make the transition from its focus on civil rights and the South to the fight against poverty and for economic empowerment. The S.C.L.C.'s attempts to mobilize an urban base through the Poor People's Campaign, the War on Slums in Chicago and Operation Breadbasket failed. And as the urban industrial base declined and whites fled the inner cities, leaving behind a concentration of black voters, blacks were elected just in time to inherit the urban crisis.

It is this urban crisis that presents the major challenge to black politics today. The inquiry and method of the black movement must shift from the South, race and moral suasion to reflect the profound changes in black existence. This, not charges of political corruption, is the fundamental consideration for contemporary black leadership, elected and otherwise. For we—and our ancestors who first embarked on the black historical project—did not have the vote or integrated public transit or the presidency of the United States as our aim. Rather, our aim was to achieve "the glorious idea of human brotherhood," as black abolitionist Frances E. Watkins wrote in 1859. This would, as the leaders of the S.C.L.C. said when the organization was founded in 1957, "redeem the soul of America." No lesser goal could have called forth the Civil War or the twentieth-century struggle against the Old South.

Unfortunately, the civil rights movement has now been

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diverted into a struggle over its byproducts—the legal remedies for discrimination and access to the economic system—which have for the most part been designed by the middle class, the chief beneficiaries of the movement. As early as 1940, while he was a young political science professor at Howard University, Ralph Bunche was compelled to write that "fights for civil rights—for the right of Negroes to serve on juries, for equal salaries for Negro teachers, for the admittance of Negroes to white colleges, and even for an anti-lynch bill—do not carry an appeal to the Negro in the mass." Instead, Bunche asserted, they meant more to "the Negro middle class who boast relatively secure positions, homes, cars, and a glittering social life, and who resent any implication of inferiority." Even today affirmative action, fair housing, integrated education and voting rights have become the means for only the most privileged or ambitious minorities to gain access to the limited "opportunities" within the system.

The legal and statutory standards that were won by the black freedom movement, as besieged as they are today, are the result of a profound compromise by mainstream black leaders, who withheld any deeper criticism of the economic structure of the nation as long as blacks were "equally" represented in it. Representation, however, pertained only to "qualified" blacks. That compromise, with all its class bias, is the hidden reality in black politics today.

If there is a black political crisis, it is to be found in the conflict between continued inequality for the black poor and traditional black political concerns. Of course, corruption must be rigorously condemned, but the deep, worsening poverty of generations of urban blacks is the singular commanding issue of black life today, and that is what our politics must address. Gangs, drugs, AIDS, the massive inchoate boycott of the schools we call the dropout rate, unemployment and infant mortality are the unrelieved, vivid products of a century of black migrants settling in urban centers. Like the Old South, this urban reality makes black life everywhere precarious. The response from established black leaders is hardly commensurate. It has been limited to the courtesy of conventional politics, to reports and documents, to the administration of the dwindling number of relief programs. What is missing is a sustained articulation of the demands of the poor and "pressure from below" to build a genuine mobilization against poverty.

If there is to be a renewal of black politics, it will depend upon the ability of leaders to embrace the cause of the poor, and in so doing, challenge the economic order, which creates poverty as casually as it amasses wealth. The insurrectionary core of the gospel that has guided the black movement proposes "putting down the mighty" in order to "exalt them of low degree." Such an effort, however, is not likely to come from complacent or corrupt black politicians preoccupied with their own political survival. There is currently a leadership void created by the crisis in black politics, but it just might be an opportunity for new leadership to emerge from the community struggles taking place far from legislative halls. The civil rights movement, after all, was launched from the seat of a bus, not the seat of political power. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Restoring Cambodian Culture

SUSAN BLAUSTEIN

Built in the twelfth century, when the Khmer empire was at its zenith, Cambodia's magnificent Angkor Wat stands today as the country's most enduring image of Khmer culture and a source of great national pride. Its unmistakable five-towered silhouette, emblazoned in yellow or red on the nation's flag, cigarette packages and bottles of the local brew, serves to remind Cambodians constantly that their civilization, now ravaged by twenty years of war and despotism, was once the most potent and influential in Southeast Asia.

French conservators were in the process of dismantling the east gallery of the colossal temple as part of a restoration effort when fighting between the U.S.-backed Cambodian government and Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge Communists forced them to abandon the site in 1971. Indian archeologists are now attempting to piece the gallery's immense carved sandstones back together, but they say the key to the French numbering system is lost. Today the once elegant vaulted arcade still lies dismembered in the thick, high grass.

Like the east gallery of Angkor Wat, many of Cambodia's cultural monuments lie in ruinous disarray. Between 1975 and 1979 Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge destroyed Cambodia's cities and its rural and economic infrastructure, and killed more than a million men, women and children. Among those systematically jailed, tortured and murdered were artists, dancers, musicians and Buddhist monks, whose callings Pol Pot and his henchmen condemned as "feudal," "aristocratic" or "bourgeois." The Khmer Rouge also destroyed almost all the country's books, Buddhas, pagodas, costumes and musical instruments, making it nearly impossible for scholars to reconstruct Khmer cultural traditions from documents or artifacts.

"The Khmer people have made two extraordinary things," says sociologist and filmmaker Vandy Kaon, one of Cambodia's most probing and vocal intellectuals, "Angkor Wat and the genocide." High on the agenda of the current Phnom Penh government, many of whose leaders are former Khmer Rouge, is the effort to reinforce its connection to the first and erase its association with the second. By calling for the restoration of Angkor Wat and other important cultural institutions, Prime Minister Hun Sen and his colleagues hope to ally themselves with a rekindled sense of Khmer identity that was laid waste under Pol Pot.

Aside from showing people that they are not heathenish murderers like the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia's leaders have a mission in supporting the revival of Khmer culture. For almost eleven years they have had to live with allegations that they allowed Vietnam to undertake a "planned ethnocide" in Cambodia that threatens to eradicate Khmer society. Vietnam was preparing to withdraw its final troops by the end of September, after a decade-long occupation that led the international community to refuse Cambodia any significant assistance. Eager for the return of Western recognition, aid and investment to help rebuild their war-ravaged country, Cambodia's Vietnamese-installed leaders are eager to prove that they are not Vietnam's puppets. Their visible commitment to the restoration of Khmer cultural traditions is one way to show the rest of the world that they are neither the perpetrators nor the victims of the so-called Vietnamese hegemony.

In an old wooden rehearsal hall at the School of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, Hun Sen's government is underwriting the efforts of three elderly dance mistresses to recollect a tale from one of Cambodia's most beloved artistic traditions, Khmer classical dance. Khmer ballet, like most dance, is passed on by example and word of mouth. But after "Pol Pot time," as the nearly four years of Khmer Rouge rule are invariably called, all but a few of the dancers were dead.

"The classical dance is just like a mirror that reflects the society," declares 70-year-old Chea Samy. "It represents the Khmer soul, just like Angkor Wat." Today the future of the Khmer soul depends almost entirely on the memories of a few aged ballerinas. Chea Samy, Ein Thearv and Ros Kong joined the Royal Ballet when they were children and Cambodia still had a king. After several years of rigorous training at the Royal Palace, they had mastered enough intricate combinations of step and gesture to dance in the long, elaborately costumed ballets that make up the classical repertory. Most of the ballets are lavish heroic tales featuring kings, queens, dancing angels (*apsaras*), monkeys, giants and other fabulous creatures. Many reenact scenes from Cambodia's version of the Ramayana, the popular Hindu epic known to the Khmer as "Reamker," which is marvelously rendered in bas-relief on the temples at Angkor. Like all ballerinas, Samy and her two friends specialized in particular roles, which they continued to perfect until 1975, when Pol Pot put an end to the dancing.

When Chea Samy returned to Phnom Penh in March 1979, after walking 100 miles from the rural cooperative where she'd spent Pol Pot time washing dishes for 600 fellow inmates, she was immediately given a mandate to form a dance school and was later asked to revive the ballet repertory as well. "I was told by Prime Minister Hun Sen to try to find every piece of documentation on the classical dance and to keep it very carefully," she recalls. Samy began by recruiting young dancers from the overabundance of orphans and by rounding up surviving colleagues as their whereabouts became known. The School of Fine Arts reopened in 1980 with 100 dance students and two teachers, and has since trained seven new teachers and an entire professional corps de ballet that performs revived works for crowded audiences in Phnom Penh, various Cambodian provinces and in other socialist countries.

In a corner of the rehearsal hall graceful young girls with delicately flexed fingers and feet are practicing basic dance movements in slow-motion for their final exams. Three spry old cross-legged musicians accompany them on two light wooden xylophones and a drum called a "sko." While a mischievous child busies himself trying to bend back one little girl's fingers even farther, the gray-haired dance teachers explain how they go about remembering pieces of the ballets. Ein Thearv conjures up individual movements by chanting the words. "Some of the songs I remember by heart," says the petite but

Susan Blaustein is a freelance writer and composer living in Southeast Asia. She is on leave from Columbia University, where she is an assistant professor of music.

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sturdy artist seated regally on the rehearsal room floor. "So I just think of a piece and sing it through, and I write it down," she says, offering a wide toothless grin between puffs on a Liberation cigarette.

When they can't remember a particular passage the former ballerinas ask one another for help. "One of us says, 'Oh, maybe it goes like this,'" Ros Kong explains, gesturing outward and turning her lifted head slightly to the left. "Then another says, 'No, it would be like that.' Eventually we decide how it should go." But most of the dance pieces are irretrievably lost, says Proeung Chhieng, one of the surviving "monkey" dancers and director of the classical dance program. Of the more than twenty dances in the repertory, his women colleagues have been able to fully reconstruct only three, and have been able to recover a mere hour or two of many five-act ballets, which he says "traditionally started at 7 P.M. and lasted until dawn." Proeung Chhieng explains that only ten female and seven male dancers from the Royal Ballet survived Pol Pot time, and that even of these survivors, "some went mad and have lost their memories because of their suffering."

The classical dance is not the only Khmer art form whose survival hinges on the collective memory of a few remaining practitioners. One of the few documents not destroyed in Pol Pot time is a handwritten catalogue listing 1,170 pieces of traditional Khmer music, all of which were lost. Cambodia's seven surviving traditional music teachers have recollected some 500 pieces, and about 400 of them have been recorded for a video archive created last year. But time is running out. Last summer one of the most venerated musicians involved in the project died. The piecing together of Cambodia's cultural traditions becomes more and more like reconstructing an archeological ruin without the key.

Because of the international embargo, the Phnom Penh government has had almost no choice about the little aid it *does* receive. Again, Angkor Wat towers as a case in point. The French conservators have not resumed their work on the monument, because their government has not recognized the Vietnamese-installed regime. In 1980, when Culture Ministry archeologist Pich Keo called for international emergency assistance to save Cambodia's crumbling monuments, India, the sole nonsocialist country to recognize Cambodia's current government, was the only one to respond. So the Indian Archaeological Survey got the prize contract to restore Angkor Wat. But its work has been subject to fierce criticism from the French, who predict that reinforcing the monument with concrete and cement, instead of the original or newly mined sandstones, will only hasten its collapse. The Indians insist that their efforts will insure another 100 to 200 years of life for the temple and that they have used original sandstone wherever possible. But there is not enough sandstone to go around, explains Indian team director B.S. Nayal, pointing out that the only quarry is in an overgrown, inaccessible jungle region where the fighting between the government and guerrilla forces continues. "The monument has to be saved, but the sandstone area is full of land mines, and no one is willing or permitted to go there," says Nayal. "So what is our alternative, I ask you?"

Pich Keo, who trained in France and worked with the French at Angkor Wat until he was taken prisoner by the Khmer Rouge, has little patience with the French criticisms. The Indians use a lot of cement, he says, but so did the French. "At least the Indians are doing something."

Poland, the only Soviet-bloc country where there is conservation expertise, has been restoring Cambodian monuments since 1986, and recently secured Culture Ministry approval to preserve Cambodia's second most important temple, the splendid Bayon. But specialists

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worry that the Polish team, hamstrung by its government's failed economy, will not be able to follow through in time to save the gravely damaged structure. French conservators, who claim to be uniquely qualified to restore Cambodia's ancient monuments, will not move without their government's permission. Japanese, Australian and American archeologists are also eager to participate in the preservation efforts, but are unlikely to receive support from their governments before a political settlement has been achieved among Cambodia's four warring factions. While the world holds out to make sure the Vietnamese leave and to see what follows in their wake, the monuments continue to crumble and Cambodians have to content themselves with whatever help they can get.

The government recently intensified its efforts to persuade its critics that Cambodia has not fallen victim to a Vietnamese "cultural infiltration." "They say we've Vietnamized the country," says Im Sethy, a senior Education Ministry official. "That's ridiculous. I can't understand a word of Vietnamese," he protests in respectable French. The government is now discouraging the use of Vietnamese; the few surviving professors of literature at Phnom Penh University have been asked to put together a new dictionary that will replace words of foreign origin with Khmer words, many of which now have to be invented.

Fears of Vietnam's heavy hand in Cambodian culture are perhaps borne out by the exploitation for political ends of leading practitioners of age-old traditions. The nine dance scripts Samy has edited for government publication are all thick with socialist rhetoric. "It is part of my job to think about the meaning of the new words and to make up gestures for them," she explains. Part of the job for 60-year-old folk musician Morm Son, one of two famous balladeers to survive Pol Pot time, is to perform revolutionary songs on government radio and television and to sing "state circulars"—government leaflets from which he improvises in rhymed verse to popular folk tunes, accompanied on his two-stringed banjo.

The government-sponsored art used to market the party line sometimes rivals the worst of Stalinist Socialist Realism. At a celebration marking the tenth anniversary of Vietnam's ouster of the Khmer Rouge, one foreign resident recalls "a splendid dance spectacle" in which "a capitalist lackey dressed like John Travolta" and carrying a bomb labeled "U.S.A." was "overthrown by another gentleman wearing a prominent [Vietnamese] star on his body."

Freedom of expression is said to be guaranteed by Cambodia's newly revised Constitution. Still, there are as yet no critical or even mildly experimental artworks in evidence in Phnom Penh. The only books printed in any quantity are exceptionally long comics produced by the Education Ministry. Most of these are elaborate morality tales, replete with references to traditional culture and Buddhism, tips on health and hygiene and unmistakable hat-tipping toward the current regime. The handful of feature-length videos produced so far by the Culture Ministry play it safe, carrying simple moral messages vividly rendered through horrific flashbacks to Pol Pot time and based on screenplays featuring clean-cut, literate and patriotic Khmer heroes who always get the girl. Even filmmaker Vandy Kaon, whose trenchant tongue is generally tolerated, has been warned about possible censorship of his forthcoming video, which takes an irreverent, absurdist view of Khmer politics and culture by challenging the sanctity of marriage, the Communist Party and Buddhist practice.

"People still fear reprisals if they are overly critical," admits Khieu Kanharith, editor of the country's most popular newspaper, *Kampuchea*, which despite its reputation for being critical and independent usually weighs in with the government line. But although there may be no greater freedom of expression in Cambodia than in other socialist countries, the accusations of a "cultural genocide" engineered by the Vietnamese are hard to substantiate. In perhaps its most visible attempt to dispel evidence supporting these accusations, Hun Sen's government recently forbade architects to design any more Vietnamese-style homes and has instructed them instead to build traditional wooden Khmer-style houses on stilts.

At the rural, southwestern tip of Phnom Penh stands the most prominent public structure built by Cambodian architects within the past year. Shaped like an elongated Buddhist stupa or tomb, this slim white building with its orange-tiled pagoda roof holds the skulls and bones of 8,985 Cambodian victims of the Khmer Rouge found in mass graves on the site, called Choeung Ek. The graves are still there, and scattered in the

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thick grass are bits of colored clothing and bone shards of the victims, many of whom were women and children.

It is said that Angkor Wat was built as a funeral temple, and that unlike all Cambodia's other monuments it faces west and its reliefs read counterclockwise because that is how the Khmer used to honor the dead. With its incorporation of traditional architectural details and its surreal juxtaposition of the graceful with the ghoulish, Choeung Ek is also a distinctly Khmer monument to the dead. It chronicles a tale that, like the battle scenes vividly depicted in basrelief on the walls of Angkor Wat, has taken on legendary proportions. The difference is that there are millions of Cambodians able to testify that the story told at Choeung Ek is true. Conceived and approved by a committee of top officials, rendered in glass, concrete and human bones, this monument was designed as a message to the world that this distinctly Cambodian government condemns the Khmer Rouge and will not countenance their return.

Cambodian artists are confident that Khmer culture can endure everything but the return of the Khmer Rouge. For Culture Minister Chheng Phon, Cambodia's cultural restoration is more urgent than either its aesthetic interest or political utility might suggest. "We must preserve the real values of the past," he says, "because the preservation of culture is part of the struggle against barbarity."

Ordinary criteria for measuring barbarity have been shattered by the savagery of the Khmer Rouge. Compared with the abuses of Pol Pot time, most restrictions on individual liberties in Cambodia today seem tame, and the regime does its best to justify them. Chheng Phon rationalizes using artists to disseminate propaganda as part of the government's attempt to "adapt the tradition to modern times." With the recent collapse of the peace talks in Paris, the government will undoubtedly continue to make use of artists in efforts to mobilize the population further against the Khmer Rouge. It might be more successful in enlisting popular support by showing Cambodians that despite its difficulties and the ongoing war, it is willing to leave their traditions and their artists alone. □

The Flexible Bard

LAWRENCE DANSON

REINVENTING SHAKESPEARE: A Cultural History From the Restoration to the Present. *By Gary Taylor. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 461 pp. $29.95.*

THE SHAKESPEARE MYTH. *Edited by Graham Holderness. Manchester University Press (U.S. distributor St. Martin's). 215 pp. $12.95.*

In England, solid citizens can get a check guarantee card, sometimes known as the Bard Card, to signify that their paper is as good as sterling. Mine, from National Westminster, has a hologram picture of what purports to be Shakespeare; with a flick of the wrist I can make the head move from right to left, left to right. This ideologically flexible Bard, who, for all his shiftings, remains (as my card reminds me) "the property of the Bank," is an apt symbol of a Shakespeare increasingly current in the academic marketplace on both sides of the Atlantic. Shakespeareans, like other professors of literature, have gone off the gold standard; increasingly they see the value of a "Shakespeare" as something arbitrarily set by a society that uses its Shakespeares to underwrite projects of power and domination. Some Shakespeareans—and they are among the most widely read and widely influential in the academic subclass—are no longer content to let the Crown be the only coiner.

What has set the Shakespeare head wagging? It's the usual gang, of course: feminism, deconstructionism, new historicism (in the United States), cultural materialism (in Britain). But those forces also have their causes. In Britain the unwitting prime mover is Margaret Thatcher herself. Old pieties about universal values ring hollow in her world of programmatically aggressive capitalism. A Tory idea floated this summer, for instance, has universities bidding against one another for groups of students and their fees; the lowest bidder gets to teach them, while other universities go customless. In this atmosphere, the young academic undergoes a crash course in economic causation and the politics of speare is subdued to the medium of history—his and ours.

In the United States, where the academic living is easier, there's a restless desire for new modes of production. Following the exhaustion of the old formalisms come the exciting possibilities opened up by new modes grounded in historical considerations. At the next annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, participants may choose among seminars on such subjects as "Class Consciousness and Class Conflict in Shakespeare," "Renaissance Women as Readers and Writers," "Historicizing Gender and Sexuality." A seminar leader encourages would-be participants "to develop *positions* regarding such questions as Shakespeare's incipient middle-classness rather than to present *readings* of individual plays." Positions must be defended; professors do battle "to gain a little patch of ground/That hath no profit in it but the name."

But was it not always thus? One of the energizing results of the turn to historicism is the recognition that Shakespeare has long been a contested site, even when reigning ideology claimed for him a place above the fray. In the generations of the New Criticism, only the laggards of textual scholarship bothered students with the thought that Shakespeare's plays as they are usually read are in significant part products of editorial, which is to say social, construction. But in the historicized academic world editors have become swashbucklers crying with Falstaff that young men must live; their formalist elders are exposed as conspirators in the mystification of an establishment Shakespeare. Along with other recent critics who have looked Shakespeare in the face and found there the encrusted generations of interested (if not always interesting) Shakespeareans, they tell stories of how "Shakespeare" came to be constructed by previous editors and critics, analyze the values those constructions underwrite, and through their demystifying stories and analyses promote the subversions newer constructions might conceivably effect.

In *Reinventing Shakespeare*, Gary Taylor tells such a story, and to hear him tell it, the story is Taylor. A couple of years ago he became a nine days' wonder with his claim that the poem "Shall I Die?" is a true product of the Shakespearean pen. As such it wins inclusion in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, of which Taylor is joint general editor (with

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takes brashness to the level of genius. If it captures the market it will significantly alter our image of Shakespeare, giving us (for just a few instances) two different but equal texts of *King Lear*, a *Pericles* that incorporates sections of George Wilkins's novel *The Painful Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, which was printed a year after the play's first printing, and a *Henry IV* with a character named Oldcastle in place of that more familiar corrupter, Falstaff. Taylor's new book takes in the entire period from 1642 to 1986, a span that takes in the time from the closing of the theaters under the first iconoclasts to the publication of *The Oxford Shakespeare*.

Much of this history is already known through individual studies of Shakespeare criticism, biography, performance or editorial practice. Taylor's extraordinary accomplishment lies not only in his indefatigable gathering but in his recognition that all the disparate bits belong to one history, which must reach further to include "the history of the theater, of publishing, censorship, journalism, education, morality, sex," until the historian is entangled "in the complex entirety of their host society, its economics, politics, ideology, its total social and material structure." The project is so big that Taylor gives it a new name: "Shakesperotics," as in semiotics with a sexy twist. It sounds dauntingly Foucauldian but, unlike the mandarin French, Taylor aims to entertain the largest possible readership. He is always lively, often witty, at times bumptious or crude. His book should be mandatory reading for any teacher of Shakespeare who's been so insulated from the winds of change as to think a bard is born, not made.

Taylor's teeming narrative method is to link everything to everything else. In this history, the eighteenth-century printer Jacob Tonson looms as large as any better-known Shakespearean. The House of Tonson published the entire series of Shakespeare editions by Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Warburton, Johnson and Capell: "These editors were chosen for the market value of their reputations, which made their names as important to the reading public as Shakespeare's." Thus Shakespeare came to owe his reputation to the moderns of English literature, as they owed theirs to him; so that "by the end of the eighteenth century Shakespeare had been . . . insinuated into the network of English literature; he could not be extracted without uprooting a century and a half of the national canon." Though some of Taylor's links don't bind, others, like this one, produce valuable configurations. It nicely illustrates the connection between economic conditions and an apparently timeless literary canon.

Most of Taylor's links are intended to enforce the lesson that "Shakespeare" has usually been a tool of cultural conservatism, nationalism and imperialism. He touches only briefly on the Shakespeare Jubilee organized in 1769 by David Garrick. It marked the birth of the birthplace as holy ground; like its native son, Stratford-on-Avon became a miracle of fecundity: The more relics it gave the more it had to give, and slivers from the true chair and sprigs from the true mulberry tree flourished in the land. The jubilee itself was a rained-out mess, but it achieved its goal of founding Shakespeare in England's green and pleasant land—not France's or even greater metropolitan Britain's; for it was at the jubilee, as far as I can make out, that the word "bard" ceased being Celtic and was fastened on England's Shakespeare; in Garrick's immortal words, "For the bard of all bards was a Warwickshire Bard." Taylor doesn't mention this semantic shift, but he makes the point that Shakespeare's failure to toe the line of Gallic dramatic theory was taken to prove not only his own superior liberality but "the openness of English society"—a myth that served in "the defense of political and social privilege."

Some of Taylor's links work only at a high level of abstraction. Orson Welles would seem to have appropriated Shakespeare for the left when he costumed Caesar's followers in Fascist shirts in his 1937 *Julius Caesar*; but according to Taylor, Welles "was also exploiting the same trope" as Mussolini, a claim that leads to some dubious connections between the rise of Fascism and, among several other things, director's theater, Shakespeare on film, the stage designs of Gordon Craig and the decline of character criticism.

Doubts one has about early parts of this story become as nothing when Taylor reaches what he calls "Present Tense." Organized as a world-hopping tour of the academic conferences Taylor attended in 1986, it justifies his description of it as "Postmodernist Shakesperotics," not only by the hectic pace of its inward-spiraling self-consciousness but also by its name-dropping and unashamed self-promotion. The "peripeteia" to the whole drama of Shakespeare's reinven-

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tions turns out to be the moment at an academic conference when Taylor and several other brilliantly gifted textual scholars propose the theory of the two-text *King Lear* in opposition to the usual editorial practice of a conflated *Lear*: "The revisionist position immediately acquires the intellectual glamour that David achieved by slaying Goliath"; opponents are converted in "a compelling model of anagnorisis"; "the revisionists recognize their own strength; the spectators, too, recognize that strength; the revisionists recognize that the spectators recognize that strength."

It's not only that Taylor makes himself the hero of Shakespeare's history. He's talking 'bout a revolution, but it turns out to be a perfectly yuppie revolution, or the hostile takeover of a profitable firm. His opportunism is glaring at the odd moment when he manages to link himself both to the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton and to Allan Bloom: "Bloom senses that the whole vast mass [of Shakespeare's reputation] has, since the 1960s, begun moving in a direction he doesn't like; Eagleton senses that the whole vast mass has been moving for centuries in a direction he doesn't like. Bloom wants to get it back on track; Eagleton wants to derail it. Both sides feel like outcasts in the only community they know." That's one powerful, best-selling community of outsiders to join in a common front.

I wish Taylor had ended at the climax. Instead he goes on to a denouement in which vaulting ambition o'erleaps itself. That final chapter attempts to deflate Shakespeare by establishing his paltry true value. Taylor throws everything he can at his gigantic target, with the result that his criteria become wildly inconsistent. For instance, he prefers the hard-edged topsy-turviness of Plautus's *Menaechmi* to the "mushiness" of the play Shakespeare made from it, *The Comedy of Errors*. He also disapproves of Shakespeare's treatment of women, without mentioning that for a final carnivalesque gesture Plautus's hero auctions his wife to the highest bidder. He objects that Shakespeare doesn't dignify the courtesan in *Errors* with a name, without mentioning that the name Plautus gives her, Erotium, is merely a type-name, as in Shakesperotics. And all the while a question intrudes: If Shakespeare isn't all that good, what does it matter how many texts of *King Lear* he personally revised, or whether the character's name should be Falstaff or Oldcastle? Why

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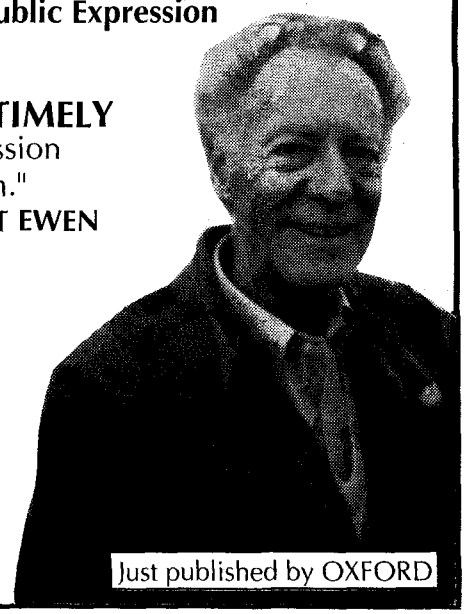

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should *The Oxford Shakespeare* matter? The failure of Taylor's assault reawakens the suspicion that beyond all the turns of fashion there is a Shakespeare, unique and wonderful, who cannot be reduced to ideological symptoms.

There's something very American about Gary Taylor's large ambitions, his desire both to shock and please, his thirst for notoriety. His work therefore makes an interesting comparison with that of the British critics self-identified as "cultural materialists." According to Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, two of its leading exponents, "Cultural materialism . . . sees texts as inseparable from the conditions of their production and reception in history; and as involved necessarily in the making of cultural meanings which are always, finally, political meanings." So far that also describes Taylor's point of view, and indeed much of current American critical practice. But cultural materialism claims to be more than a critical theory: "It registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order that exploits people on grounds of race, gender, sexuality and class." That quotation comes from their foreword to *The Shakespeare Myth*, a volume of essays edited by Graham Holderness, the latest in a series of books in which the same group of names, influential beyond their number, reappear in various configurations: John Drakakis edited *Alternative Shakespeares*, with essays by (among others) Dollimore and Sinfield; Dollimore and Sinfield edited *Political Shakespeare*, with an essay by Holderness; Holderness's *The Shakespeare Myth* has essays by Sinfield and Drakakis.

Unlike Taylor, these British critics are consistently ideological. In *The Shakespeare Myth* the word "hegemony" reoccurs with the persistence of a hiccup: Cultural materialism intends to expose (as the subtitle of one essay has it) "Shakespeare as a Hegemonic Instrument." The cultural materialists have made attempts at rapprochement with the American new historicists, but style (which is history as well as personality) gets in the way: There's no political imperative that could make Stephen Greenblatt write anything that wasn't eloquent, subtle and elegant. Terry Eagleton contributes an afterword to *The Shakespeare Myth* that contains the best defense of bad writing I've ever read. He claims that "any society which survives by structural injustice must secrete rhetoric as readily as it equips an army; and this is one reason why those who hold the view of the contributors to this book can never thrill innocently to such verbal resourcefulness as mere 'eloquence.'" He invokes the authority of that failed revolutionary, Caliban, who "knew that language was ambivalently emancipation and enslavement; and there is," Eagleton claims, "much to be said for a Caliban school of Shakespearean criticism." (Yet the afterword to Dollimore and Sinfield's *Political Shakespeare* is written by Raymond Williams in a finely tuned literary voice that might make Caliban be wise hereafter and seek for grace.)

There's another difference: few American Shakespeareans feel as embattled in their society as these British critics feel in theirs; thus the Americans turn their attention to the first Elizabethan age while the cultural materialists are more embroiled with the second. *The Shakespeare Myth* includes essays, of widely varying quality, on Shakespeare in the English school curriculum, the BBC as "a central agency of national culture mediating a hegemonic ideology," the Leavis influence on Cambridge's theatrical hegemony, the conflict between residents of Southwark and proponents of a plan to reconstruct the Globe Theatre in their neighborhood and other issues that may strike an American as parochial. But for cultural materialists, "Shakespeare" has always been parish property; they aim to wrest control.

The Shakespeare Myth is not the strongest work by this school of critics, and it suffers from the absence of their sharpest member, Terence Hawkes. Holderness's innovation is what he calls a "polyphonic medium . . . productive of great cultural difference and ideological contradiction." This means that the volume contains interviews with some perceived opponents, like Terry Hands of the Royal Shakespeare Company and John Wilders, literary consultant to the BBC/Time-Life Shakespeare Series. The interviews are generally preceded and followed by cultural materialist essays which tend to dampen the polyphony. Sam Wanamaker, for instance, the quixotic campaigner for the rebuilt Globe Theatre, protests to his interviewer that he's an old socialist and the son of a union organizer, only to be described in the succeeding essay as "one of the representatives of the alliance of capital and culture."

Holderness's collection is dedicated "to the memory of the Reverend Francis William Gastrell," who in 1756 chopped down Shakespeare's mulberry tree and, in 1759, his house, "and thus entered history as one of the great cultural vandals." But at the jubilee a decade later Garrick's bardolators were enshrining bits of that tree, and for a small sum you can still visit the remains of that house. Will Gastrell's heirs be any more successful? Shakespeare, like liberal democracy, has an amazing capacity to enfold the opposition. In the 1985 volume *Political Shakespeare*, Alan Sinfield described the R.S.C.'s practice of using scholarly material in its program notes as a "convergence of the academic and theatre Shakespeares" to advance the political and cultural "concerns of the higher-educated audience." In 1988-89, Sinfield wrote the program notes for the R.S.C.'s megaproduction *The Plantagenets*, a three-part, nine-hour adaptation of the first historical tetralogy. Sinfield's notes tell how, in the plays, "a precarious social arrangement succumbs to contradictions in its structure," and how a director might reveal "the ideological character of dialogue and imagery that seems to represent the prevailing power arrangements as natural, inevitable, and right." It's a very good essay, but on the day and night I saw *The Plantagenets* at the Barbican (that dismal fortress of privilege) none of Sinfield's production ideas were apparent on stage.

Even in Thatcher's England the liberal establishment disarms opposition by granting the appearance of success. It's unlikely that the materialist critiques of hegemonic Shakespeare will go far toward transforming that social order. But those critiques have already done much to transform the professional study of Shakespeare, and much of the transformation is exciting and good, even if it portends no withering away of the great rooted blossoming Shakespeare tree. □

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Get Up, Stand Up

GENE SANTORO

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER: The Story of Political Pop. *By Robin Denselow. Faber & Faber. 292 pp. $19.95.*

Coming in the wake of the apparent resurgence of social commitment in popular music since the punk explosion of the late 1970s, this book was probably inevitable. Not only does the subject beg to be covered, but the entertainment and publishing conglomerates that dispense information to us all also milk any trend that comes along. And as Tracy Chapman, Bob Geldof and countless others have shown, good politics can translate into good numbers—and good numbers are the only ideology accountants know.

You won't learn that from *When the Music's Over*, however. For Robin Denselow—a British journalist who, according to the dust jacket, "specializes in both pop and politics"—the world of political pop is a relatively simple if rambunctious place that consists largely of good guys (the politically committed), misguided guys (the politically confused or uncommitted) and bad guys (politicians and corporate executives). Sometimes the good guys and the bad guys go eyeball to eyeball; more often various combinations of good guys engage in the power/ideological struggles/backbiting at which the left is so adept.

Within this reductive frame, Denselow charts a history of political pop that is largely fair and interesting. Beginning with folkies like the Weavers in the 1950s, he walks us through the 1960s civil rights/antiwar era in the United States, Britain, Brazil and Greece (the last country is more off pop noise's beaten path); the 1970s and 1980s in the Caribbean and Africa; the last decade in Ireland; and the recent megamedia campaigns against nuclear power, apartheid, Margaret Thatcher and so on.

Denselow covers events over a wide geographical and cultural range. Focusing primarily on charismatic figures like Ewan MacColl, Bob Marley and Billy Bragg, he provides a generally solid, competent assessment of music's interaction with political movements and ideals over the last forty years. Perhaps inevitably, he pays disproportionate attention to developments in Britain. And he gets the details wrong, calling Pete Seeger "Peter," Keith Richards "Richard," Charles Mingus's "Fables of Faubus" "*Fables of Forbus*," for example.

The terms around which his book revolves, however, are never resolved or even significantly examined—which both limits and frees him. Since Denselow never effectively defines what he means by political pop, he is able to roam around the music world and across genre lines with what might seem like commendable impunity if it didn't seem more like naïveté.

What exactly do Pete Seeger, Elvis Presley, Harry Belafonte, Bob Marley, Miriam Makeba, Harry Chapin, The Sex Pistols, Tracy Chapman, Ewan MacColl, The Who, Bob Geldof, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Stevie Wonder, Bob Dylan, Thomas Mapfumo, Jello Biafra and U2 have in common? Denselow never explicitly says; he just assumes a continuity between old folkies like Seeger and MacColl and rock-and-rollers around the globe, whether political activists or rebels by cultural definition. But whereas folkies like Seeger and many Third World rockers hearken back to a worldwide tradition of the newsbearing troubadour—a tradition Denselow rightly notes—First World rockers (and, as they enter First World–run pipelines into the international marketplace, musicians everywhere) have a completely different heritage.

For while rock was born as a folk music, it quickly became a commercial property whose managers manipulated it to their own ends. By the early 1960s, for instance, the rockabilly rebels of the 1950s were dead or in the Army, Chuck Berry was in prison and oodles of Dick Clark–sponsored voiceless wonders were crooning "rock" songs that Bing Crosby could have sung.

Unfortunately, the closest Denselow comes to articulating anything about rock as commercial music is in passages like this: "Rock 'n' roll was under attack from the start, but this exuberant new style, unsure of its power or even whether it would last, merely tugged a forelock politely at the establishment. (Bill) Haley tried reason, Elvis joined the army, and none of the first generation rockers rocked the political boat."

The civil rights/antiwar movement of the 1960s changed that, of course, with its explicit, folkie-derived recognition that music, as part of the culture, can help create a community and articulate shared

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ideals, values, goals. Bernice Johnson Reagon, longtime activist and leader of the women's a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, puts it succinctly: "The singing was used to create the climate, to get people ready to address the issues. So any statement from lawyers, or a testimony from someone who'd been arrested, was always presented on a bed of song. And the songleaders were absolutely essential. . . . A job had to be done by the singing, and it wasn't done by someone singing a solo."

The crucial change over the past twenty years has been the growth and consolidation of the entertainment industry. Rock is now a megabusiness (if you don't believe that, just ask Sony/CBS or Time Warner); in 1987 it grossed some $5.5 billion in the United States. The bits and pieces of the modern delivery system that began to emerge in the 1930s—radio, for instance, which made folk heroes of Woody Guthrie and Benny Goodman—have been assembled into a more controlled mass-marketing machine. Its components include playlist radio and MTV (which draws directors and artists back and forth across the nonexistent line between music videos, which are of course ads themselves, and commercials), corporate underwriting and sponsorship of tours and major events, record companies (owned by larger conglomerates with far-flung interests), retailers (which are increasingly large chains) and, naturally, the press.

While this doesn't translate into a conspiracy of evil geniuses who can make records number one on the charts, it does mean that enormous pressure can be exerted in a casual way to keep smaller players (independent record labels or breaking bands, for instance) off the field—if you can manage to find out where the field is. As nearly anyone who's ever worked in a record store can explain, the *Billboard* charts that serve as the industry's bible are steadily if quietly manipulated by various enticements from record companies to the underpaid retailers who report sales figures to that trade magazine.

In this context virtually every overt political act or message by a musician, however well-intentioned, is inevitably distorted. When Amnesty International runs tours sponsored by Reebok, with the TV and radio coverage saturated with endorsements of motorcyles and soda pop by the people coming on and off the stage, you have to wonder just what message the audience is getting. (Though A.I.'s membership rolls and general public awareness level obviously got a deserved boost from the tour.) The same questions can—and, unfortunately, must—be asked about Live Aid, Farm Aid and every mega-event mounted by contemporary conglomerates.

The implications roll on from there. Just one example: What does the outpouring of environmental concern on the part of musicians mean in the context of an industry so dependent on petrochemicals? (Once you've noticed that, it does seem odd and perhaps revealing that so much concern is lavished by U.S. and British rockers on Japanese fishing practices and Brazilian logging.)

Underlying issues remain. Does anyone—can anyone—in a culture as commercial as ours actually respond in a meaningful way to messages about revolution, racism, poverty, sexual freedom, child abuse and teen-age pregnancy that are sandwiched between the same old

AIR SHOW

Five bucks a ride, you're part of the sky,
master of distances, light but snug
in the cabin's hold. Five bucks—
the lines are long, but ragged, at ease.
Kids beg for more, men dare one another, bet
on a crash, as the little planes bank and bounce
in, rise and turn again over the gravestones
that nudge the runway, over the plain frames
of houses growing smaller, over the ribbons
of road, the quilt pieced of turning trees.
Upstate, backcorner—the only good job's
guard at the jail; most people never have flown.

Five bucks, chance of your life—my friend
pulls on his leather helmet, steps on the footrest,
then the fighter's shiny wing. Everything stills—
even the pennants on the kids' bigwheels, the burgers
hissing on the grill. I feel the looks: curious,
fearful, in sympathy; one woman near me smiles.
We all know there's no time to glide—
a plane so fast and heavy will fall hard
if the engine goes. We may be watching something
eternal: the moment that etches in memory
as the last of a thing.
My friend
holds the windshield and slides down in.
Thumbs up, Herb holds the extinguisher ready,
in case. Thumbs up—burst of exhaust, rush
of several tons past gravity, and we are taken
in the rise, the dive, the vanishing,
breathless, as someone who loves flight
or is brave or gives little value to his life
cuts the sky in half.
We can't see or hear now,
we press our faces up, to the emptiness, the wondering
why—

The returning roar, the bold arc
and swoop and slice above the crowd
push the heart past hesitation. Brian points—
a hawk not far off is doing it differently,
just lazing on the air. What we want:
to be that effortless, that light, believing
machines can change us. But there is still
only the one life, and my friend chooses to take it
on the wing, with no glide time. We clap and cheer,
released now, as he slides in, alive to his chances.

Joan Aleshire

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thirty-second spots about acne medicine and chewing gum? Whether in the form of huge charity events or as tunes played on commercial radio, 1980s political pop is not, after all, a modern analogue to the wandering singer performing in the town square. If we all pretend at times that it is, that's only because the contradictions are too daunting to deal with.

I don't have any answers, but I wish Robin Denselow had at least raised the questions. Then we might actually be able to begin talking about what political pop is. In the meantime, he's taken a fact-filled first step on the long road ahead. □

Mothballed

MICHAEL EDENS

THE WRITING LIFE. *By Annie Dillard. Harper & Row. 111 pp. $15.95.*

Fifteen years ago, in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard wrote that she had "no intention of inflicting all my childhood memories on anyone"; in her last book, *An American Childhood*, she did exactly that. She wasn't wrong, really, to break that promise—*Childhood* was a very good book, almost a great one—but still, it indicated how attenuated and self-obsessed her work was becoming. Now, in *The Writing Life*, Dillard has gone one step farther down that path: She has moved from writing about herself to writing about writing about herself.

The Writing Life isn't a bad book, exactly—I don't think Dillard is capable of writing anything awful—but it's thin and fragmented, and self-pitying. Nothing comes more easily to a writer than moaning about the creative agony of the artist, but Dillard has always had such perfect, poetic taste and such a fine sense of the ridiculous that I would never have expected it of her. Though her work has probably never sold in proportion to its merit, she does have a Pulitzer Prize and at least one best seller under her belt. So it's just plain embarrassing when she whines that writing is "work . . . so meaningless, so fully for yourself alone, and so worthless to the world, that no one except you cares whether you do it well, or ever." Ten minutes at a job that really is meaningless might change her mind.

I have called the book fragmented, but anecdotal might be a kinder term—though it implies the same limitations. Several of the anecdotes in *The Writing Life* deal with Dillard's work on *Holy the Firm*, "a favorite, difficult book," though she's too shy to mention it by title. Dillard is horrified when she discovers that two neighbor children, 6 and 7 years old, have read the book, or perhaps have had part of it read to them. "'WHAT?' I said." And "WHAT?" she cries, in capital-letter anguish, when they ask her a question about the moth. (*Holy the Firm* opens with a description of a moth caught in a candle flame, simultaneously being consumed in and illuminated by the fire.) Apparently, Dillard considers the book beyond the comprehension of even adult mortals. "No one had understood [it] but a Yale critic," she tells us, grandly, and there it was, approached by mere children! The 7-year-old offers his professional opinion of the work ("I liked that story"), and she chokes on that, too. "Why," she asks, "did it seem to console me to repeat to myself, 'Oh well, he's older'?" Dillard apparently means this to be amusing, in an ominous sort of way (out of the mouths of babes you will learn how shallow or misunderstood you are). And it *is*, but not in the way that she intends. In one of the funniest parts of *An American Childhood*, Dillard wrote about herself as a precocious grade-schooler, reading the Modern Library classics in search of something as good as *Mad* magazine. "*The Interpretation of Dreams* was okay," she said, but Joyce's *Ulysses* was just "awful." Is Dillard really so vain that she can't see the humor in it when one of her own books gets the same sort of treatment?

Even on a subject as barren as this one, though, Dillard's prose style remains amazing. Reviewers tend to use adjectives such as "luminous" and "radiant" in describing her writing. That usually means vague and sentimental and pseudopoetic—but she's not. Her prose is rich when it needs to be, but she never merely assembles conglomerations of syllables for their own sake. The nature writing in Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* can take the reader's breath away with its beauty, but she never yields to the temptation to be falsely pretty. I grew up in southwest Virginia,

Michael Edens is a freelance writer living in Greenbelt, Maryland.

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probably not far from what was then her Tinker Creek home; when I saw how many pages of *Pilgrim* were devoted to starlings and copperhead snakes, I knew she wasn't afraid to report the fauna of the area as it actually exists. More important, everything in that book, and in most of her others, has a meaning beyond the literal. I sometimes believe that Dillard took Blake's "To see a world in a grain of sand/and a heaven in a wild flower" as her job description.

Most of Dillard's books have moments of immense beauty and power—that is why it is so jarring how silly some of the metaphors in *The Writing Life* are. Writing desks hover "thirty feet from the ground"; the writer, she says, must crank "the engine of belief that keeps you and your desk in midair." (Trust your feelings, Luke. The Force will be with you.) A two-page chapter is devoted to a typewriter that turns volcanic, "exploding with fire and ash." It shakes the walls and floor of her house in its fury; she grabs a bucket of water to douse it, but decides to leave it be, though the eruptions recur randomly through the night. A couple of days later, it works just fine. I know Dillard wants us to think deep mystical thoughts about creative fire, but the only deep thought I had was this: Could one of the most brilliant writers of our time be dumb enough to want to pour water in a burning electrical appliance?

One could be cynical and argue that there's a reason *The Writing Life* seems mostly self-obsessed: that Dillard has been navel-gazing so long that her chin has become permanently attached to her chest. But I don't really think that's the problem. Yes, most of her books are ultimately about herself, but they are really about how she transforms what she perceives. (To return to one of the controlling metaphors of *Holy the Firm*, it is the body of the moth that is illuminated in the candle flame, but the beauty is in the glow of the light.) Dillard's books, whatever their nominal subjects, constitute her spiritual autobiography, and that's the riskiest kind of writing—her books work only if every sentence is an epiphany. That's a word critics have debased beyond recognition, but Dillard's best work honestly provides something that can only be called revelation, and that something cannot be faked. So there may be a good reason that her last couple of books have been merely about the inside of her head: What else can you write when the epiphanies don't come? □

LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 406*)

who isn't the greatest reporter in the world. It took over three months after his *Nation* article appeared ["Ishmael Reed's Literary Army," May 22, 1982] for *The Nation* to print my response to the piece ["Letters," Sept. 4, 1982], which carried some unfavorable, and what I considered uninformed, opinions about a foundation and a press I had founded in the 1970s.

I suspect that Stevens is another victim of Elizabeth Pochoda who, like Gloria Steinem and *The Village Voice*'s Ellen Willis, seems incapable of dealing with her phobias about black men and sends young feminist fundamentalists like Stevens to do her hatchet work.

The *Village Voice* book review, run by white and gender supremacists, also printed a negative review of Angela Davis's *Women, Culture and Politics* because Davis, with characteristic chutzpah, exposed the feminist movement's racist attitudes toward black men. Though Stevens may wish to give the impression that all is solidarity in Sisterhood land, Davis's charge of feminist racism has also been made by other black feminists, including Barbara Smith, Bell Hooks, Gwen Carmen and Trudier Harris, whose criticisms of Alice Walker's work—printed in *Black American Literature Forum*—make my mild remarks about Steven Spielberg's view of black America in *The Color Purple*, a film that opened the multibillion-dollar black male-bashing racket, appear tame indeed. Was poet Sonia Sanchez, a household name among black Americans, engaging in "tantrums" when she complained about this dangerous film, reminiscent of those the Nazi film industry produced about the Jews?

Audre Lorde takes Walker to task for her dismissal of the term "black feminist" as "sounding like some new kind of perfume" in her book *A Burst of Light*, winner of the 1989 American Book Award. Does this mean that Lorde is "demonizing" black women? Is Stevens's definition of a misogynist anybody who criticizes Walker's projects?

Stevens also wants to have it both ways. While calling for an alliance between feminists and minority men against "rich white men" (What about rich white women?), Stevens, in the course of an interview with Susan Griffin printed in Berkeley's *East Bay Express* (April 14), agreed with Griffin that men are biological mutants (a retreat to Valerie Solanis's SCUM position) who can be redeemed only by becoming women—a kind of gender twist on the old Aryan bugaboo, which casts as subhumans your "inferiors." Stevens wrote, "Griffin shows how women, by reminding men of their bodies, call men's attention to their own connection to nature, their fragility."

The radical intellectual wing of the feminist movement has been heading in this

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lethal and paranoid direction of dehumanizing men since a key conference, given little notice by the media, held in New York on April 4, 1987, titled "The Sexual Liberals and the Attack on Feminism," during which men were denounced as the enemy and women who have relationships with men as "traitors." A black woman who complained about the lack of participation in the conference by women of color was ridiculed from the stage by a white feminist conference organizer, according to *Off Our Backs*. "I don't like the term 'women of color.' It sounds like a perfume," she said. The publication noted that "Several Black women, including [an] African student, walked out." Lisa Duggan, a writer for *Gay Community News*, accused the conference of pushing "lesbian separatism, circa 1978."

This wouldn't be the first program co-opted by privileged people like Gloria Steinem, who during this conference endorsed the Minneapolis antipornography censorship ordinance, yet appeared later on the business page of *The New York Times* begging Italian patriarchs for capital and assuring them that she was not a radical like the others.

For Stevens, and deep-end feminists like her, all the evil in the world is caused by men. This dizzy California suburban middle-class feminist fascism—for which Marin County New Age writer Alice Walker is the high priestperson and whose new book, *The Temple of My Familiar*, recycles a myth popularized by the late Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammed, in which the origin of whites is traced to an African scientist's experiment gone wrong—is attracting middle-class and academic feminists. In response to Stevens's and Griffin's interviews, Michael Steinberg of Berkeley wrote, "My God, aren't we tired yet of finding new ways to divide the human race into good and bad, into superior and inferior, into decent and obscene? . . . It must be comforting to feel that you are not responsible for everything that is wrong or badly warped in society, like war, pollution, destruction, nuclear weapons (it's the men, or the Jews, or the blacks or the Asians or the Arabs . . .)." Cheryl Rucks, an Oakland writer, wrote: "I renounced feminism in favor of humanism when I realized that the 'men' described by feminists were an alien species, having little or nothing in common with my male coworkers, teachers, students, and friends."

The consignment of all whites to subhuman status by some 1960s black power advocates destroyed the civil rights movement and paved the way for Reagan. It seems that feminists who, according to Mary King in her book *Freedom Song*, stole the SNCC program almost word for word (merely changing the pronouns) haven't learned a thing.

Ishmael Reed

Editor's Note: Jackie Stevens's reply, along with others, will appear in a forthcoming issue.

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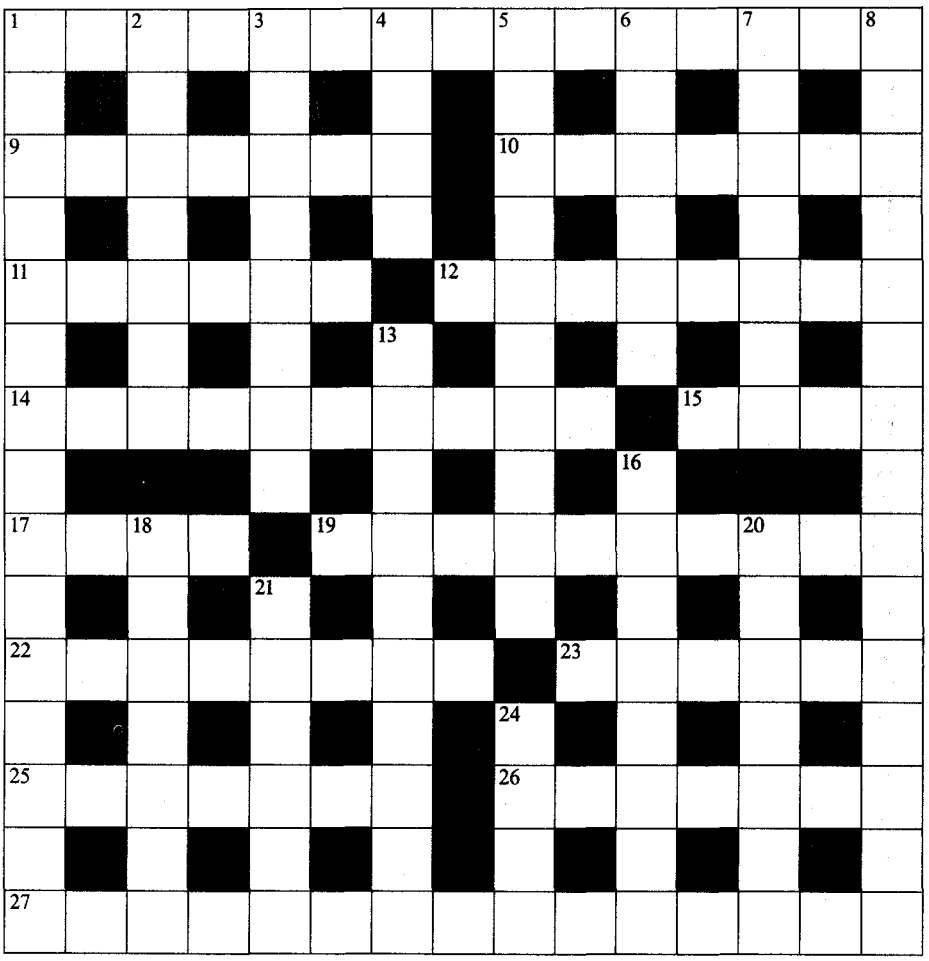

ACROSS

1 Runner, of sorts, for office. (8,7)
9 Took care of the refreshment bill, helping one who might be patient. (7)
10 What's wrong with the instrument—no strings attached? This is supposed to take care of a lot! (7)
11 To rage wildly when offered a drink flavored with almonds and orange flowers? (6)
12 Wild boar, actually existing like something out of the trees. (8)
14 With German *Unterseeboot* his sort, I find, is probably a Japanese model. (10)
15 Like something added to the letter, they might prove dangerous. (4)
17 Cries coming from very nasty types, shortly! (4)
19 Dropped change seen around other than closed city. (10)
22 A common law action should get something back, which is a sign of quiet to the French five, when in control. (8)
23 Get the entire supply where Jack sat? (6)
25 To rig a microscope properly shows a technique that is several-fold representational. (7)
26 How to help the wrong way carries little weight, according to the descriptive instructions. (7)
27 Commonly not very bright judicial declarations of punishment, which can't have more than one clause. (6,9)

DOWN

1 They may be good to eat, however a lot of pounds are put on with cereal, of a sort, ending up in the kitchen and other places in the house. (6,9)
2 Skill and dexterity sound of little importance! (7)
3 The worth of the catch (after expenses?). (3,5)
4 Not a hard drink—therefore the law officer might be caustic. (4)
5 Rather coy when such as dollars and cents are all about! (England and many other countries have had them for some time.) (10)
6 A good place for birds—or at least for a wise one! (6)
7 Fish studies taking place in such as 24? (7)
8 Founders, as most people remember, because the usual modern rum's not so usual! (7,3,5)
13 Certainly not an adult one puts ropes around—forming an important segment of the population. (10)
16 The girl searched for in the air can get around a despicable type with a certain amount of salt. (8)
18 The one of fire is not so wet as the churchy type, but more dangerous. (7)
20 Considered no-name by some, the old "clean" politician doesn't get quite rich. (7)
21 It will, just before winter, as things happen. (6)
24 Need a change? (Suez was too much for him!) (4)

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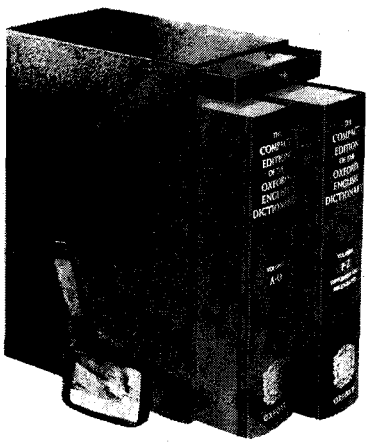

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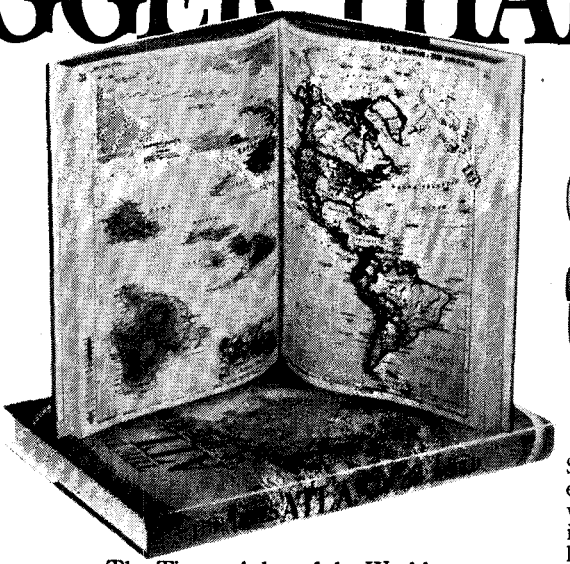

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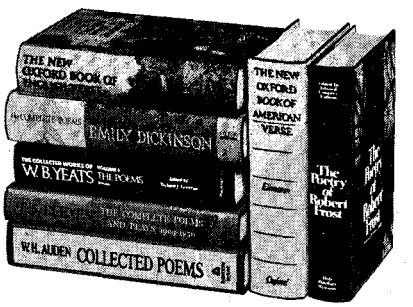

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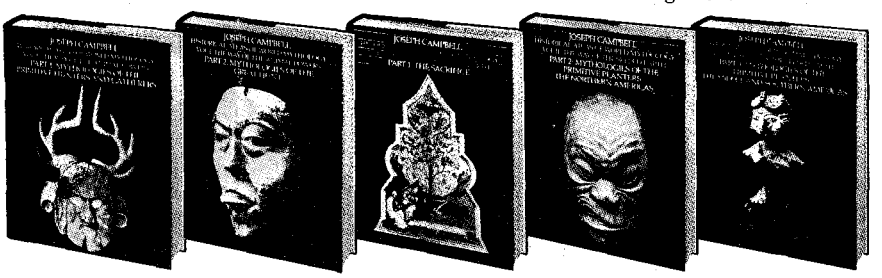

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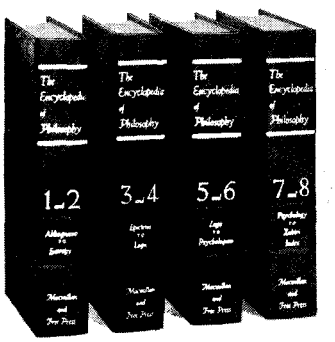

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